



Art History Encounters presents:

Timeless Tuscany

(Lucca, Pisa, Carrara, Volterra, San Gimignano, Siena, Pienza, Montepulciano)

April 22 to April 30, 2025

Spend a week in Tuscany experiencing the art and architecture of Italy's most beautiful region. Renaissance art historian Elaine Ruffolo will be your guide for this unique trip full of great art, excellent food, and unforgettable landscapes. Tuscany is the region that gave us Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Galileo, Amerigo Vespucci, Puccini, and many more artists, inventors, designers, and geniuses. It is fair to say the world would be immeasurably poorer and less beautiful without their efforts.

Were Florence to tumble into the Arno and disappear forever, Tuscany would continue to be one of Europe's most alluring destinations for the culture-seeking traveler. Such is the profusion of great art and architecture in the surrounding region. The Renaissance is brilliantly represented, with major works by leading Quattrocento artists - Donatello, Ghiberti, Jacopo della Quercia, Michelozzo, Benozzo Gozzoli, Ghirlandaio, Pinturicchio, and others. But in terms of quantity, spectacularity and variety, the Middle Ages predominate. Buildings of magnificence and beauty and astonishing immensity abound, while in the field of painting, Siennese artists such as Duccio and the Lorenzetti brothers have no equals. Sculpture is particularly important here, with the Pisano family creating some of the greatest works of the Gothic era.

The region is also famous for its landscape, which is among the most beautiful in Europe. Richly textured, consistently undulating, subtly various though invariably punctuated by the black-green uprights of cypress trees, olive trees, and the gold-green striations of vineyards.

There are two bases for this tour, both utterly lovely and characteristic. **Lucca** is a small valley-floor city of Roman origin hemmed in by hills, girded by red-brick ramparts and consisting of a succession of enchanting streets and squares. Draped on three hills, **Siena** is the most beautiful city in Tuscany, a flamboyant medieval ensemble of palaces and towers cast in warm brown, burnt-Siena colored brick. Its soaring skyline is its pride, dominated by the blazing black and white banner of a cathedral and the taut needle of the Torre di Mangia. The Palazzo Pubblico, in the very center of Siena, is four streets away from olive groves and orchards. This contrast is part of the city's charm: densely built-up brick urbanity, and round the corner a fine stretch of long Tuscan farmland. Here, art went hand in hand with fierce civic pride to make Siena a world of its own.

Arrival in Lucca on Tuesday April 22; departure on Wednesday April 30 from Siena, 2025

Price:

\$5,800 (based on double occupancy)

\$7,400 (based on single occupancy)

What's Included:

- Accommodations for 8 nights in luxury hotels
- Daily breakfast at hotel, 3 dinners, 5 lunches, 3 receptions, and 1 tasting
- All group transportation
- Airport transfers
- All entrance fees, donations, and tips
- Expert instruction and program tour manager

Accommodations in Lucca:

Grand Hotel Universe

Piazza del Giglio, 1

+39 0583-40041

Accommodations in Siena:

[Hotel Continental](#)

Via Banchi di Sopra, 85

+39 0577-56011

All times refer to meeting in the lobby of the hotel unless otherwise indicated



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Tuesday April 22

Lucca Arrival and Orientation

Small group transfers from Florence airport to Lucca in private vans (approximately 1 hour).

Check in to the Grand Hotel Universe in the heart of Lucca.



3:30 pm Depart on foot for an exploration of the historic center of Lucca. Learn about the city's ancient Roman origins and see what the city's back alleys and smaller squares reveal about Lucca's growth in the Middle Ages and Renaissance.

6:00 pm Enjoy a welcome reception and dinner near the hotel.
(reception, dinner)



Wednesday April 23

Lucca and Villa Reale at Marlia

The morning walk takes in enchanting streets and major buildings, including the Romanesque cathedral of S. Martino, home of the extraordinarily beautiful Gothic tomb of Ilaria del Carretto. Walk out to the church of San Frediano and stroll along the famous 16th century walls of Lucca.

Free for lunch on your own in the center of Lucca.



2:00 pm Visit the famous Napoleonic gardens of Villa Reale in Marlia (about 20 minutes outside of Lucca).



6:00 pm This evening you will be welcomed to the home of jewelry designer and costume historian, Annette Klein, and her husband, famed photographer Massimo Vitali, for a visit and reception in their home in a lovingly restored 14th century church.

Group dinner following the visit.
(breakfast, reception, dinner)

Thursday April 24

Carrara and Pietrasanta



8:30 am Depart Lucca to visit the quarries in Carrara, where Michelangelo personally chose his marble. Climb into jeeps and make your way up the vertical roads that lead to blinding white stone caverns and breath-taking views.



12:30 pm Travel by coach to charming Pietrasanta for a group lunch and free time to explore the village. This charming town is perched on the slopes leading to the Tyrrhenian Sea and is filled with lovely shops, art galleries, and studios.

6:00 pm Return to Lucca in the early evening and free for dinner on your own.
(breakfast, lunch)

Friday April 25

Pisa/San Miniato/Siena



8:30 am Check out of the hotel and head to Pisa. In the Middle Ages, Pisa was one of the most powerful maritime city-states in the Mediterranean, the rival of Venice and Genoa, deriving great wealth from its trade with the Levant. We will visit the *Campo dei Miracoli*, which is a magnificent ensemble of cathedral, burial ground, campanile ('Leaning Tower') and baptistery, all made of gleaming white marble.

12:00 pm Head Southeast towards Siena stopping in picturesque San Miniato for a group lunch.

3:30 pm Arrive in Siena and check into the Grand Hotel Continental.

Free for dinner on your own.
(breakfast, lunch)





Saturday April 26

Siena: A Gothic Dream

9:00 am Siena is the largest hilltop town in Tuscany (it is in fact a city), distinguished by its exquisitely elegant red brick architecture and artistic design. The 14th-century Palazzo Pubblico has frescoes by Simone Martini and the Lorenzetti brothers. Visit also the cathedral, an imposing Romanesque and Gothic construction of white and green marble with outstanding Renaissance sculpture and painting including Pinturicchio's brilliant frescoes in the Piccolomini Library and the font by Ghiberti, Donatello and Jacopo della Quercia.



12:45 pm Free for lunch on your own.

3:00 pm This afternoon we will visit by special permission the archives of Siena and a private *contrada*.

7:30 pm Enjoy a group dinner at Osteria Le Logge.
(breakfast, dinner)



Sunday April 27

Pienza and Montepulciano

8:30 am Formerly called Corsignano, Pienza was the birthplace of Pope Pius II, humanist, historian, traveler, autobiographer, and patron of architecture. In 1464 he commenced the rebuilding of his hometown and provided it with a cathedral, bishop's palace, town hall, a palace for himself and a new name. Consequently, Pienza entered the annals of architectural history as the earliest example of Renaissance town planning.

1:00 pm Enjoy a group lunch in the heart of Pienza.



3:00 pm Depart for the hill town of Montepulciano whose main thoroughfare is lined with grand palaces, winds circuitously through this once important city, with the Piazza Grande at the summit. The cathedral here is rich in Renaissance works of art. Outside the town, the centrally planned church of San Biagio by Antonio da Sangallo is one of the masterpieces of the Renaissance. Stroll down the slopes of Montepulciano through caverns and finish with a taste of the grape for which Montepulciano is justly famous.

(breakfast, lunch, winetasting)



Monday April 28

San Gimignano/Volterra

8:30 am San Gimignano, city of medieval towers is one of the most suggestive places in Tuscany. We will walk through the town, view the towers and visit the Romanesque collegiate church containing two great cycles of trecento frescoes depicting scenes from the Old and New Testaments from the period of the Black Death.

12:00 pm Depart for Volterra and enjoy a group lunch.



This afternoon wander through Volterra's narrow alleyways, you'll find historic landmarks like the Roman Theater, the towering Medici Fortress, and the Piazza dei Priori, where the afternoon sun illuminates the town hall's stately architecture. Finish with a visit to the Etruscan Museum, one of the town's key attractions. Inside, you'll find a fascinating collection of artifacts from the Etruscan civilization, including pottery, sculptures, and ancient burial items. The museum is quiet and well-organized, offering a deep dive into the town's pre-Roman history.

Return to Siena in the early evening.
(breakfast, lunch)

Tuesday April 29

Villa La Foce

9:00 am Depart for Villa La Foce, former home of Iris Origo, with its stunning gardens designed by Cecil Pinsent. The gardens of La Foce are considered one of Italy's most beautiful and were conceived to enhance the Renaissance house and expand the spectacular view over the valley of the Orcia and Mount Amiata. The harmony between buildings, garden, and nature makes La Foce an ideal example of Tuscany's architectural and cultural evolution at the turn of the 20th century. We will have an extensive tour of the gardens and lunch on the property.

Return to Siena for a free afternoon.

7:00 pm Gather for a farewell prosecco at the hotel.
(breakfast, lunch, reception)



Wednesday April 30

Depart Siena

Group transfers to Florence airport