

# UMBRIA & SOUTHERN TUSCANY

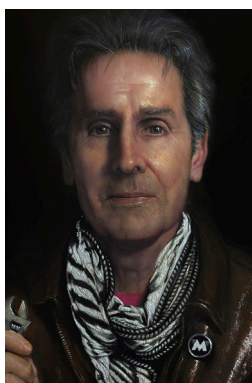
GEMS OF CENTRAL ITALY

## OVERVIEW

Umbria and Southern Tuscany are home to a host of Italy's most picturesque medieval towns and regional centres.

This area is also celebrated for the beauty of its landscapes, from the verdant valleys and mountain forests of Umbria to the rolling hills and vineyards of southern Tuscany, not to mention its prized cuisines and exceptional wines. Here you will also find extraordinary masterpieces of medieval and Renaissance art and architecture, and numerous ancient sites unspoilt by mass tourism.

This 14-day tour explores Umbria and southern Tuscany in depth, from its Etruscan and Roman past through medieval glory and on to the masterpieces of the High Renaissance. With three and four-night stays in Spoleto, Perugia, Cortona and Pienza, you can enjoy the best this region has to offer in the relaxing manner it deserves.



## TOUR LEADER

**Neil Moore** is a Walkley Award-winning illustrator, artist and art historian who has lived in Umbria, Italy for over 30 years. Born in Oxford, Neil grew up in Melbourne and Canberra and has an Honours degree in Fine Arts from the University of Sydney, where he also taught art history. Pictured is Neil's most recent self portrait.

## TOUR DATES

**May 2-15, 2024**

## TOUR PRICE

**\$10,420** per person, twin share  
**\$2,520** single supplement

## TOUR DEPOSIT

A **\$1,000** non-refundable deposit is required per person to confirm your booking on tour.

## GROUP SIZE

Maximum number of **16** in group

## ITINERARY

Spoleto (3 nights), Perugia (4 nights), Cortona (3 nights), Pienza (3 nights)

## INCLUSIONS

**13** nights' accommodation in centrally located 4 and 5-star hotels. All breakfasts, 4 lunches, 3 dinners and an aperitivi. Services of an expert tour leader and an experienced tour manager throughout. All ground transport, entrance fees and tipping.

## ITALY



## DETAILED ITINERARY

### Start & Finish

The tour starts at 3.00pm on Thursday 2 May, at Rome Fiumicino airport. The tour ends at 12.00pm on Wednesday 15 May, at Rome Fiumicino airport.

Included meals are indicated with B, L, D.

## TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

### Medieval Hill Towns

Umbria and southern Tuscany are littered with rocky outcrops standing above fertile plains. Explore their winding laneways, market squares and Romanesque and Gothic churches at a relaxed pace.

### Renaissance Masterpieces

Admire some of the finest masterpieces by such notable Renaissance artists as Benozzo Gozzoli, Filippo Lippi, Pinturicchio, Perugino, Signorelli and Piero della Francesca.

### Hidden Histories

This is a part of Italy where art seems almost literally to rise up from the ground. Discover the hidden histories of the region, from unexpected Roman and Etruscan sites to masterpieces in small, out of the way churches.

### Exceptional regional cuisine

While contiguous, Umbria and southern Tuscany have very different microclimates and thus pronounced variations in food and wine. Enjoy specialised local cuisines throughout the tour.

### A different Italy

In provincial Italy, life moves at a different pace and artisanal traditions live on. Go to the source of some of Italy's traditional handmade goods, including the majolica of Orvieto, the linen of Montefalco and the stained glass of Perugia.

### Thursday 2 May

#### Arrival

The group gathers at Rome Fiumicino airport in the mid-afternoon for a coach transfer to Spoleto. On arrival we take time to freshen up before a short orientation stroll followed by welcome dinner in a local restaurant. Overnight Spoleto [D]

### Friday 3 May

#### Spoleto

Spoleto's strategic importance – on a steep hill guarding the southern approach to the Vale of Umbria – has resulted in it having rich layers of history that preserve the different periods of its habitation since the 7th century BCE. After a preparatory talk in the hotel, we embark on a walking tour of the town, exploring its Roman and pre-Roman remains through to its glorious Duomo, home to Filippo Lippi's masterpiece *Life and Death of the Virgin* from 1469, his last work. After a break for lunch, we proceed to Neil Moore's house, a 13th-century castle tower in the hamlet of Colle del Marchese, where we enjoy aperitivi before returning to our hotel. Overnight Spoleto [B, aperitivi]

### Saturday 4 May

#### Ancient Umbria

Umbria was one of the first territories conquered by the Romans, and its rich agricultural lands and reserves of metal would fuel the expanding republic. This morning, after a visit to the Romanesque church of San Pietro ex Moenia, we explore a part of Umbria's Roman past with a guided tour of Carsulae on the ancient Via Flaminia, one of central Italy's best preserved archaeological sites. We then enjoy a traditional Umbrian lunch in a local restaurant in the nearby pretty hilltown of San Gemini, before returning to our hotel in Spoleto, with the evening at leisure. Overnight Spoleto [B, L]

### Sunday 5 May

#### Montefalco and Spello

Umbria's smaller medieval hill towns are among Italy's best-preserved, and their location well off the highway between Florence and Rome has kept tourist numbers down. This morning we visit Montefalco, whose museum is home to an exceptional fresco cycle from 1450 on the life of St Francis by Florentine master Benozzo Gozzoli. After a fine lunch at a local restaurant,



we proceed to Spello where we take a walking tour of the town. Amongst the principal sights is a magnificent fresco cycle by Perugino's junior colleague Pinturicchio in the Baglioni Chapel. We continue by coach to Perugia, our base for the next four nights and, after settling into our hotel, enjoy an introductory walk to the town's Etruscan gate, continually in use since the 2nd century BCE. Overnight Perugia (B, L)

### **Monday 6 May**

#### **Perugia**

Perugia guards the northern pass into Umbria and has an impressive history, from Etruscan origins to a bustling medieval city state and its renewal as a contemporary centre of culture. This morning we explore the city on foot, beginning with a tour of the underground city and then up to the Collegio del Cambio – a medieval guildhouse with Renaissance frescoes from 1500 by Perugino who at the time had Raphael as his apprentice. After free time for lunch, we visit the National Gallery of Umbria, with its numerous masterpieces of medieval and Renaissance art.

Overnight Perugia (B)

### **Tuesday 7 May**

#### **Piero della Francesca**

Piero della Francesca's art is characterised by his ability to capture a calm stillness and refined beauty through his exceptional understanding of mathematics, perspective and geometry. Today we travel to Monterchi where we see his celebrated *Madonna del Parto*, and then to San Sepolcro, his home town, to admire the recently restored *Resurrection*. On our return to Perugia after lunch we explore an aspect of Umbria's artisanal heritage, visiting the Brozzetti handloom textile workshop, miraculously still producing beautiful products from a converted church. Overnight Perugia (B)

### **Wednesday 8 May**

#### **Assisi**

In spite of its fame, Assisi retains a strongly spiritual atmosphere. Today we tour the Basilica of St Francis, a masterpiece of Gothic architecture covered in frescoes, some of which are attributed to Giotto and others by the Sienese artists Pietro Lorenzetti and Simone Martini. We follow our visit with a walking tour of the town itself, visiting the 1st-century CE Roman temple in the piazza and the excavated Roman Forum below. After free time for lunch and independent exploration, we return to our hotel in Perugia, with the evening at leisure. Overnight Perugia (B)

### **Thursday 9 May**

#### **Orvieto**

Today we transfer to Cortona in Tuscany via Orvieto. Perched high on a volcanic escarpment on the border

of Umbria and Lazio (ancient Latium), Orvieto was a major Etruscan city and the religious centre of the Etruscan league. Its importance revived in the Middle Ages and through to the Renaissance when its position on the Tiber made it an ideal papal refuge. We explore the city on foot, starting at the cathedral with its phenomenal mosaic decorated Gothic facade and decoratively striated Romanesque nave. Inside we admire Luca Signorelli's masterpiece, the Apocalypse fresco cycle painted in the San Brizio chapel in 1500. After lunch we take a fascinating tour of the underground city, carved out of the soft tufa stone on which the city is built, and then continue to our hotel in Cortona. Dinner will be enjoyed together in a local restaurant. Overnight Cortona (B, D)

### **Friday 10 May**

#### **Cortona**

Cortona was an ancient Etruscan city, splendidly situated with a view down to Lake Trasimeno and across the rolling hills to Arezzo. It was also home to Luca Signorelli, and the Diocesan Museum has a good collection of his works as well as a wonderful Annunciation by the great Fra Angelico. The recently reorganised Etruscan museum also has significant pieces and our morning is occupied with these two collections. The afternoon is free to wander the picturesque streets of this elegant town. Overnight Cortona (B)

### **Saturday 11 May**

#### **Arezzo**

Arezzo is one of Tuscany's most refined cities, and it has a long history of producing great writers, artists and musicians, including Guido d'Arezzo, – the 12th-century inventor of modern musical notation – the scholar Petrarch, and the art historian Giorgio Vasari. We undertake a walking tour of the town exploring its art and history, including a visit to Piero della Francesca's masterpiece, the *Legend of the True Cross* fresco cycle, in the Church of San Francesco. After lunch in Arezzo, we enjoy a wine and cheese tasting at a Renaissance villa. Overnight Cortona (B)

### **Sunday 12 May**

#### **La Foce and San Biagio**

We depart Cortona by coach this morning, destination Pienza. Passing through the iconic Tuscan landscape of the Val d'Orcia we visit La Foce, the garden of Anglo-American writer Iris Origo. Origo's attachment to the Val d'Orcia is not only evident in her literary accounts of the area during the rise of Italian fascism and World War II but also in the huge efforts she made during her life to transform the land from barrenness to abundance. After a guided visit of the garden, we make our way to nearby Montepulciano – a stunning Tuscan hilltop town

## HOTELS

Throughout the tour we stay in 4- and 5-star hotels. Where possible we have selected hotels that preserve the history and traditions of the region.

### **Spoletto, Hotel San Luca**

(3 nights)

[www.hotelsanluca.com](http://www.hotelsanluca.com)

### **Perugia, Hotel Sina Brufani**

(4 nights)

[www.sinahotels.com](http://www.sinahotels.com)

### **Cortona, Villa Marsili**

(3 nights)

[www.villamarsili.net](http://www.villamarsili.net)

### **Pienza, Relais il Chiostro**

(3 nights)

[www.relaisilchiostrodipienza.com](http://www.relaisilchiostrodipienza.com)

## WEATHER

May is an excellent time to visit Umbria and southern Tuscany. After the rigours of winter but before the heat of summer arrives, you will see a verdant landscape, the trees with fresh green foliage lining fields of poppies and wildflowers. Expect average daytime highs of 24-25C, and average night time lows of 15C. We recommend bringing clothing that are easy to layer, and a waterproof jacket.

## FITNESS REQUIREMENTS

### **Grade Two**

This tour is physically demanding.

To participate on this tour, you should be able to:

- keep up with the group at all times
- walk for 5-7 kilometres over the day at a moderate pace
- stand and slow walk for up to 90 minutes galleries and museums
- negotiate walking over uneven ground on dirt tracks
- walk up and down steps and slopes
- get on and off a coach with steps unassisted

with breathtaking views over the countryside below. It's here we enjoy lunch at a fine local restaurant in a beautiful 16th century building, before visiting the renaissance Temple of San Biagio nestled among the rolling hills just outside of the village. Continuing to Pienza in the late afternoon, we check-in to our hotel with the evening at leisure. Overnight Pienza (B, L)

### **Monday 13 May**

#### **Pienza & Montalcino**

We begin the day with a walking tour of the town, laid out precisely according to the new Renaissance principles on the orders of its most famous son, Enea Silvio Piccolomini, Pope Pius II. We then travel to the historic Abbey of Sant'Antimo, strategically placed on the medieval pilgrim route, the Via Francigena. Founded in the time of Charlemagne it was once a regional power centre but then fell on hard times until 1992 when it once again became a working monastery. After a light lunch in a renowned wine estate near Sant'Antimo, we continue to Montalcino, home of the world-famous Brunello wine. We enjoy an afternoon stroll around the town's idyllic cobblestone streets. On return to Pienza, the evening is at leisure. Overnight Pienza (B, L)

### **Tuesday 14 May**

#### **Bolsena and Bagno Vignoni**

Today we drive to Bolsena, built on the edge of one of the world's largest volcanic crater lakes where, weather permitting, we take a boat ride on this very picturesque lake. In the town we pay a visit to the church of Santa Cristina, scene of the 1263 Miracle of Bolsena which is the origin of the Catholic Feast of Corpus Christi. After free time for lunch we proceed to Bagno Vignoni whose piazza of steaming geo-thermal water provides the backdrop for our farewell drinks and dinner. Overnight Pienza (B, D)

### **Wednesday 15 May**

#### **Departure**

This morning we transfer by coach from Pienza to Rome Fiumicino Airport, in time for mid-afternoon international flights. (B)



## ENQUIRIES & BOOKINGS

For further information or to secure a place, please contact **Sharon Williams** on 9235 0023 (Sydney) or 1800 639 699 (outside Sydney) or email:

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