

See the glorious Chianti countryside in Tuscany on foot

# Bella Italia!



## Walk

The lush, rolling hills of Italy's Chianti region are best enjoyed slowly.

Soak up its charms with Hedonistic Hiking, a small company that offers guided gourmet walking holidays, run by a friendly husband and wife team. They're very knowledgeable about the area, its culture and history so you can learn as you stroll.

Their Tuscan Harvest holiday includes five days of walking and one day of rest. The walking is not difficult but there are lots of ups and downs so you need to be reasonably fit and have sturdy walking boots. The longest walking day is 10 miles, the shortest five. Should you find yourself flagging, a support vehicle can rescue you at lunchtime and whisk you back to your hotel.

Words: Emma O'Reilly; Photos: Alamy, Corbis, Robert Harding

## Sightsee

Along the way you'll see castles and gardens, delve into old frescoed churches and pass vineyards and farms where you can do tastings of wine and olive oil. You may be lucky enough to see the grapes being harvested in the Chianti Classico area (usually in September and October).

There's one day when you have a break from walking so you can spend some time exploring Siena. The city is a Unesco World Heritage Site and a beautiful place to wander, with its cobblestones, alleyways and fascinating architecture. You'll get a private tour of some of its lesser-known artistic attractions, too.





## How to book

The next Tuscan Harvest trip is from 1-8 October 2015 and costs £2795 per person with Hedonistic Hiking. The price includes airport transfers from Pisa, accommodation, all food and wine (including gourmet picnic lunches some days, snacks and restaurant dinners), and sightseeing. For details of this and other itineraries in Italy (and also in Slovenia and Australia) visit [www.hedonistichiking.com](http://www.hedonistichiking.com).



## Stay

There's nothing better, after a day of exertion, than being able to return to a little pampering. The two hotels on this itinerary are four and five star. One – La Suvera (above) – used to be a papal villa and has beautiful gardens and a stunning pool, the other – Palazzo Leopoldo, an old palace (below) – has a small spa and a rooftop terrace for drinks with a view. Both offer a warm welcome, comfortable rooms and bags of history and character.



## Cook

Make fresh pasta in the 16th-century kitchen of a private country villa, under the guidance of a well-known local chef – it's easy when you know how. Of course you get to eat the results, washed down with some local wine.

## Eat

You'll be treated to the most heavenly Italian cuisine during your trip. Feast on fresh burrata cheese and sweet ripe tomatoes, melt-in-the-mouth truffle

risottos and hearty ribollita vegetable soup.

Our favourite restaurant was Ristoro di Lamole, high up in the Tuscan hills with panoramic views from the terrace. Lip-smacking dishes include pear and ricotta ravioli with pecorino cheese, fennel flavoured salami and cinghiale (wild boar) ragu.

Chianti Classico wines are a good accompaniment. The restaurant sells excellent olive oil, made locally, so take some home as a souvenir.