



HEDONISTIC HIKING
FOOD • WINE • WALKING

**FULLY-INCLUSIVE
GUIDED GOURMET
WALKING HOLIDAYS
IN ITALY AND BEYOND**



www.hedonistichiking.com





Hedonistic Hiking

In 2007 our enthusiasm for delicious food, fine wine and great walking gave rise to Hedonistic Hiking and, for over ten years, we have shared these passions with our guests. Our small group, guided hiking holidays travel across a growing number of Italy's most striking landscapes, as well as crossing its borders into France, Slovenia and Austria.

Alongside some spectacular hiking we set out to give our guests an insight into the region's gastronomy, its wine and its cultural heritage. We meet with food and wine experts, test and taste local produce, enjoy al fresco picnics and stay in hotels carefully selected by us for their charm and comfort.

In a bid to maintain high environmental standards this brochure has been designed to live for more than one season. All of our tours are featured here, although not all of them run every year, so you will find dates and pricing on our website at **www.hedonistichiking.com**. The website has all the latest information and more details on each tour including day by day itineraries, accommodation descriptions, maps and sample menus.

If you share our passion for food, wine and walking then we hope to welcome you on a tour very soon!

Jackie and Mick Parsons



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Food. Wine.

Well over half of our guests return to walk with us in Europe more than once but if this is your first introduction to Hedonistic Hiking, we hope the following information addresses some of your queries.

How long are the walks?

Each of the individual tour pages features the distances for the shortest and longest days, ranging from 5 km up to 23 km. Our tour grading system takes into account the terrain, altitude and levels of ascent or descent on a given day. There is also a support vehicle on hand so that guests can choose to walk as much or as little as they please. The only exception to this is high mountain days where, on occasion, there is no road access on our route.

What is the average age of the hikers?

Most of our guests are in the 50-70 age range, although we have welcomed hikers in their 80s and in their 30s. Hedonistic Hikers come from English-speaking countries all over the world, so the groups are an interesting mix of friendly, like-minded travellers.

How many people will be in the group?

The maximum number in any group is 16 with two guides for each tour, bringing the number up to 18, and we travel in two 9-seater minibuses.

What if I am travelling on my own?

Our tours are made up of solo travellers, couples and small groups of friends. Mealtimes are relaxed, convivial affairs and are ideal for anyone who enjoys sharing wonderful meals and sparkling conversation! All solo travellers are allocated their own double rooms for single use, subject to a nominal single supplement.

How fit do I need to be?

If you are active and enjoy walking, you can choose from a wide range of tours. Our grading system will give you a better idea of the most appropriate tour for your fitness level and clearly indicates the most challenging hikes. To help raise fitness levels before your holiday, visit our website for tips on building strength and useful stretches in addition to choosing the right clothing and equipment.

Walking



Do I need special clothing?

It is essential to come equipped with waterproof walking boots and quick-drying walking shirts and trousers. A lightweight day rucksack is also recommended but we have lots of advice about what to bring on the inside back cover of this brochure and also on the website. Space in the vans is limited so it is extremely important to travel light.

What if I have special dietary requirements?

We ask you at the point of booking a tour to let us know of any allergies or intolerances which we would need to know about. We communicate these well in advance to all restaurants and hotels on the tour, and to the tour manager who prepares the picnic lunches.

How often do we move hotels?

Our tours have either two or three hotels and we stay at least two nights in each hotel, up to four nights on some trips. The exception is our Palio tour where we base ourselves in Siena for the whole week.

What is included?

- Accommodation in atmospheric hand-picked hotels
- Support and local knowledge of two experienced guides
- All meals matched with fine local wines
- Gourmet picnic lunches
- Dinners at superb local restaurants
- A support vehicle at all times (except a few high mountain days)
- Transport to/from the start and end of the holiday
- Comprehensive pre-trip information
- Luggage transported so all you need to carry is a small backpack
- Museum visits, cooking classes and wine tastings as per each individual itinerary

Our tours are genuinely all-inclusive, excluding the flight. Our guest feedback rates us excellent in terms of value for money.

Who leads the groups?

We are an Anglo-Australian Italian-speaking husband and wife team, and one of us leads every tour. Living much of the year in Italy allows us to design and research the finite details of every tour ourselves, which ensures that our guests have the best possible experience. We are supported by a small team of dedicated and extremely knowledgeable colleagues who help with logistics.

Jackie & Mick Parsons



Visit www.hedonistichiking.com for full details of all tours and for information to help you plan your holiday.



AUSTRIA AND THE DOLOMITES

Splendours of the Austrian and Italian Tyrol

9 Days **START:** Innsbruck **FINISH:** Verona

This tour starts in Innsbruck and explores the delightful Tyrol landscape of Austria and Italy. We hike in the beautiful Deferegggen valley in the Hohe Tauern National Park with spectacular views of Austria's highest peak, the Grossglockner (3798m). We cross the border from Austria into Italy on foot to hike in the UNESCO World Heritage mountain scenery of the Dolomites and discover the region's captivating Tyrolean hospitality and culture. We have a guided tour of the fascinating museum in Bolzano, which is dedicated to the 5,300 year old Otzi frozen man, before finishing in Verona with its impressive Roman arena and world-famous opera festival.



HIGHLIGHTS:

- UNESCO World Heritage landscape of the Dolomites
- Spectacular alpine hiking
- Fascinating Tyrolean culture in Italy and Austria



WALKING (LEVEL 5):

Mountain hiking on well-graded alpine trails, rocky in places. Significant ascents and descents every day, from 500m - 800m, and 1000m on the final day. A very sound level of fitness is required.

Shortest/Longest Day: 11km/7miles: 19.5km/12.3miles



THE BEST OF THE ITALIAN ALPS

Hiking in the shadow of Europe's highest mountains

9 Days **START:** Turin **FINISH:** Turin

Visiting the Italian Alps in July is to see them in their very best season. We hike surrounded by spectacular views of the Gran Paradiso, Monte Rosa and Mont Blanc mountain ranges and, although the Val d'Aosta is the smallest region of Italy, it is big on hospitality and delicious French-influenced cuisine. We have a three night stay in exquisite Courmayeur, which sits on the border with France, from where we take a cable car to the "rooftop of Europe" at 3466m for unbeatable views of Mont Blanc. We hike a section of the Tour of Mont Blanc, visit ancient castles and follow in the footsteps of Roman armies, medieval pilgrims and Napoleon Bonaparte. The Gran Paradiso National Park, where we finish, is home to some unique wildlife and, at this time of year, stunning flower-filled alpine meadows.



HIGHLIGHTS:

- The Eighth Wonder of the World – a cable car journey from Courmayeur to the heart of the Mont Blanc Massif at 3466m
- Abundant alpine flowers
- Breathtaking views



WALKING (LEVEL 5):

Terrain: Mountain hiking on well-graded alpine trails. Although many of the distances are short there is a significant amount (up to 800m) of ascent and descent, notably on days 3, 6 and 8, so a sound level of fitness is required.

Shortest/Longest Day: 6km/3.8miles: 11km/6.7miles



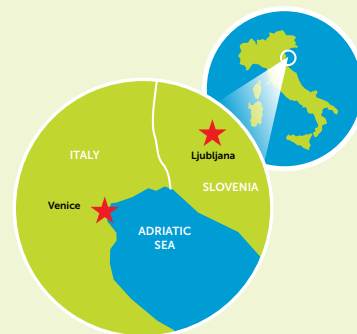


SLOVENIA AND FRIULI

Lakes and Mountains, Waterfalls and Wine

9 Days **START:** Ljubljana **FINISH:** Venice

Slovenia, often referred to as “The Sunny Side of the Alps”, is a tiny, beautiful, green country on Italy’s north eastern border. After meeting in its capital city we travel to tranquil Lake Bohinj and hike in the stunning Julian Alps. We visit Kobarid on the dazzling turquoise Soca river, a town of great significance during World War 1 and immortalised by Ernest Hemingway in his novel “A Farewell to Arms.” Here we stay in a delightful family-run hotel with an award-winning restaurant. We make the border crossing between Slovenia and Italy on foot to arrive in the Italian region of Friuli, where we explore the excellent vineyards of the Collio hills and the UNESCO World Heritage sites of Cividale and Aquileia.



HIGHLIGHTS:

- Crystal clear lakes and turquoise rivers
- Climb Mount Matajur to cross Italian-Slovene border on foot
- Walk to the Franja Partisan Hospital in the Pasica Gorge



WALKING (LEVEL 4):

Terrain: Farm tracks and mountain trails. Ascend/descend 300-400m on most days, with an 800m ascent on Day 6. The mountain trails are rocky in places with short sections of exposed terrain on Day 3

Shortest/Longest Day: 6.5km/4.1miles: 10.5km/6.6miles



THE ITALIAN LAKES

Lakes, Gardens and Majestic Mountains

8 Days **START:** Milan **FINISH:** Milan

This tour explores three of the famous lakes of northern Italy: Lake Como, Lake Maggiore and the lesser-known Lake Orta. All three have a magnificent backdrop of the snow-capped peaks of the Italian Alps, making the scenery on this trip particularly spectacular. We stay in three hotels, two of which are located right on the lake shore and have their own private jetty. The tour passes through Switzerland and we visit, and hike near, the Swiss city of Locarno on the north western shore of Lake Maggiore. In addition to our vehicles we use boats, cable cars and funiculars to transport us to different areas for walking, and we have the opportunity to visit the stunning gardens of Isola Bella and Villa Taranto. A private guided visit on the first day to some of Milan's hidden artistic gems completes a sensational itinerary for this tour.



HIGHLIGHTS:

- Private guided visit to some of Milan's hidden artistic gems
- Private boat trips on Lakes Como, Maggiore and Orta
- Visits to the gardens of Isola Bella and Villa Taranto



WALKING (LEVEL 4):

Terrain: Cobbled mule tracks, woodland trails and rugged mountain trails. Significant ascents and descents (up to 800m) on days 3 and 6

Shortest/Longest Day: 7km/4.4 miles: 18km/10 miles





THE MOUNTAINS OF PIEDMONT

Protestants, Pilgrims and Alpine Panoramas

9 Days **START:** Turin **FINISH:** Turin

This tour explores four stunning alpine valleys to the west of the regal city of Turin. Val Susa was an important medieval pilgrimage route and is dotted with churches and abbeys. Amongst them is the awe-inspiring Sacra di San Michele, a magnificent monastery perched high on a rocky spur with unbroken views of the valley below. Val Pellice was a haven for the hounded Valdese Protestants whilst the Po and Varaita valleys were both important trading routes into France and beyond. This tour offers superb mountain hiking and fantastic alpine flowers and wildlife, interwoven with the intriguing history of the region. We stay in two delightful family-owned hotels and enjoy the celebrated cuisine of Piedmont, which is known around the world for its excellent ingredients and world-class wines.



HIGHLIGHTS:

- Visit the magnificent Sacra di San Michele
- Invigorating alpine hiking
- Superb Piemontese cuisine and wines



WALKING (LEVEL 5):

Terrain: Mountain hiking on well-graded alpine trails, rocky in places. There is a significant amount of ascent and descent on most days (500m to 850m) so a very sound level of fitness is required.

Shortest/Longest Day: 5.5km/3.5miles: 15km/9.3miles



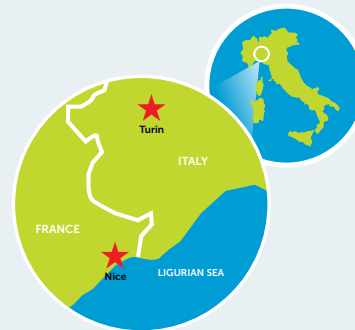


FRANCE AND THE MARITIME ALPS

Over the Alps from Provence to Piedmont

9 Days **START:** Nice **FINISH:** Turin

This itinerary takes us over the Alps from the South of France to the North of Italy. The tour explores the stunning Mercantour National Park, a short distance from Nice on the Cote d'Azur, before we cross the border between France and Italy to hike in the Maritime Alps. We stay in the small ski resort of Limone Piemonte at 1,000 metres and finish in the elegant Piedmontese city of Cuneo, where we learn to cook local specialities. The mountain hiking has dramatic and spectacular views of snow-capped peaks, lakes and streams, and carpets of wild flowers in spring. We discover the rich history of this region on foot, with its nineteenth century forts built along the border, attractive historic villages and a delightful remote church with 15th century frescoes.



HIGHLIGHTS:

- Fascinating cross-border culture
- Spectacular alpine hiking through carpets of wild flowers
- Fun cooking class in Cuneo



WALKING (LEVEL 5):

Terrain: Mountain hiking on well-graded alpine trails, rocky in places. There is a significant amount of ascent and descent on most days (500m to 850m) so a very sound level of fitness is required.

Shortest/Longest Day: 6km/3.7miles: 16km/10.1miles



THE JEWELS OF PIEDMONT

A Celebration of Slow Food

8 Days **START:** Turin **FINISH:** Turin

Piedmont is the birthplace of the global "Slow Food" movement and our tour here celebrates much of this region's world-class produce. We taste the superlative wines of Barolo and Barbaresco, hunt for the legendary white truffle of Alba, enjoy creamy risottos made from the local arborio rice and learn about hand-crafted artisan cheeses. The walking takes us on gentle trails through the immaculate vineyards of the area as well as on more mountainous tracks, past glassy alpine lakes and tiny hamlets suspended in time. We visit palaces, castles and monasteries and explore the pivotal history of this prosperous region. Piedmont is recognised throughout Europe for its culinary expertise and we have the chance to dine in some of its most prestigious restaurants.



HIGHLIGHTS:

- Outstanding food and world-class wine
- Truffle hunting with a local expert
- Stunning hikes with backdrop of snow-capped mountains



WALKING (LEVEL 2):

Terrain: Rolling hills, farm tracks through woods and vineyards. Rugged mountain trail on day 4

Shortest/Longest Day: 6.5km/4.1miles:12km/7.6miles





NORTHERN TUSCANY AND RAVENNA

The Mugello, Medieval Villages and Mosaics

8 Days **START:** Bologna **FINISH:** Bologna

This tour starts and finishes in Bologna, the culinary capital of Emilia-Romagna. We drop down to the northern part of Tuscany to explore the unknown territory of the Mugello: a wide, green valley criss-crossed by the Sieve river, shaping a landscape filled with vines, chestnut woods and beech forests. Our hikes take us over lands which inspired great Renaissance artists and poets and we follow sections of the Gothic Line, the last major German defensive line in the Italian campaign of World War II. We travel towards the Adriatic coast to finish in the unrivalled city of Ravenna, once the capital of the Western Roman Empire, but still home to some of the world's most dazzling Byzantine mosaics.



HIGHLIGHTS:

- Private guided tour of UNESCO World Heritage sites of Ravenna
- Fabulous tastings at wine and olive-oil estates, and the October chestnut festival
- Outstanding hiking in lesser-known part of Tuscany



WALKING (LEVEL 3):

Terrain: There are 6 days of walking on the trip. We usually walk on strade bianche (gravel roads), woodland tracks and quiet tarmac roads. The Mugello region is part of the Apennine mountain chain and we hike between altitudes of 400m and 1000m. The terrain is relatively hilly, with some significant ups and downs, but not mountainous.

Shortest/Longest Day: 7km/4.4miles: 17km/10.7miles



PARMA, TUSCANY AND THE LIGURIAN SEA

Prosciutto and Parmesan, Pilgrims and Poets

8 Days **START:** Parma **FINISH:** Pisa

This tour starts in Parma, one of the gastronomic centres of Emilia-Romagna, and home to some of Italy's most iconic gourmet specialities. We also visit the Slow Food town of Borgotaro as it celebrates its annual porcini mushroom fair and tour a local parmesan cheese factory. We hike one of the most beautiful sections of the ancient pilgrim route to Rome, known as the Via Francigena, and discover Tuscany's untouched Lunigiana region. We continue towards the crystal clear waters of the blue Ligurian Sea and the famous "Gulf of Poets" which was immortalised by Lord Byron and the Romantic poets. The final day is free to explore the quaint coastal town of Lerici or take a boat trip across the bay to Portovenere and the charming villages of the Cinque Terre.



HIGHLIGHTS:

- Visit a parmesan cheese producer and learn what it takes to make a wheel of the famous cheese
- Hike one of the prettiest sections of the Via Francigena pilgrim trail, complete with medieval stone bridges
- Lazy day on the coast with boat trip to Portovenere or the Cinque Terre



WALKING (LEVEL 3):

Terrain: Hilly terrain with some long days interspersed with easier days.
Paved pilgrim trails, woodland and farm tracks

Shortest/Longest Day: 5.4km/3.4miles: 23km/14.3 miles



LUCCA, VOLTERRA AND THE ISLAND OF ELBA

Hiking through Tuscan history

9 Days **START:** Pisa **FINISH:** Pisa

This classic Tuscan tour starts in the artistic gem of Lucca – a beautifully preserved city encircled by its Renaissance walls lying just south of the stunning marble mountains of Carrara. We visit Volterra, a timeless hilltop town with Etruscan and Roman history and hike to San Gimignano with its unmistakable skyline of medieval towers. On our way to the beautiful island of Elba we stop in Bolgheri – now one of the most exciting and innovative wine regions in all of Italy. We finish on Elba, hiking almost to its highest point and exploring its capital city and the villa which was home to its most famous exile – Napoleon Bonaparte.



HIGHLIGHTS:

- Explore a jewel of the Tuscan Archipelago with island hiking
- Learn about the rich culture and history of the towns we visit
- Discover lesser-known but impressive Tuscan wines



WALKING (LEVEL 3):

Terrain: Strade bianche (gravel roads), woodland tracks and quiet lanes, although Day 3 has more mountainous terrain. The rest of this area of Tuscany is hilly but not mountainous

Shortest/Longest Day: 6km/3.7 miles: 18km/11.2 miles



THE PALIO OF SIENA

Italy's Greatest Spectacle

9 Days **START:** Pisa **FINISH:** Pisa

The Palio horse race in Siena is one of the most spectacular festivals in Italy. It is the culmination of months of preparation in the city and the Palio itself is a 4-day event. To watch it on TV, read about it in the paper or even stand in the square and watch the race itself is only to scratch the surface of this fabulous tradition. We stay for the whole tour in the very centre of Siena and immerse ourselves in the history, rituals and folklore of this unique event. We witness the horses being selected, visit the private art collection of the city's oldest bank and dine in the streets the night before the race alongside thousands of excited Siennese residents. It is a once-in-a-lifetime experience and truly unforgettable.



HIGHLIGHTS:

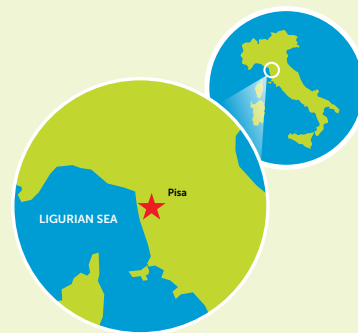
- Grandstand seats for the race
- Pre-race Contrada dinner in the streets of Siena
- Private visit to a Contrada museum



WALKING (LEVEL 1):

Terrain: Three half-day hikes in rolling countryside outside the city. A lot of city walking

Shortest/Longest Day: 6km/3.8miles: 9km/5.7miles





A TUSCAN HARVEST

Chianti, Castles and Tuscan Cooking

8 Days **START:** Pisa **FINISH:** Pisa

This is classic Tuscany with the tour celebrating the region's unmistakable landscape, abundant vineyards and strong culinary heritage. The hikes take us off the beaten track to remote castles, formal gardens and the vineyards of Chianti where we meet local winemakers to taste their wines and olive oils. A free day in Siena offers the chance to explore this medieval jewel and see the Piazza del Campo where the legendary Palio horse-race is run twice each year. We have fun with a local chef making our own pasta in the sixteenth century kitchen of a private country villa. We get to enjoy a variety of fabulous restaurants along the way which showcase the very best of Tuscan cooking and the region's world-famous wines.



HIGHLIGHTS:

- Cooking class with delightful local chef
- Beautiful hiking in classic Tuscan countryside
- Visit to Siena with private guided tour



WALKING (LEVEL 2):

Terrain: Mostly gentle walking on gravel roads and farm trails. Rolling hills so lots of up and down but no major climbs.

Shortest/Longest Day: 9km/5.7miles: 16km/10.1miles





MEDIEVAL UMBRIA

Abbeys and Art in the Apennines

8 Days **START:** Arezzo **FINISH:** Arezzo

This tour starts in Arezzo with a visit to the world-famous fresco cycle by Renaissance artist Piero della Francesca before continuing to a leisurely lunch and olive oil tasting at an organic farm in the charming town of Anghiari. We stay in the historic town of Sansepolcro and cross from Tuscany into Umbria over the Apennine mountains with beautiful views across both regions. We follow evocative pilgrim trails, once trodden by St Francis of Assisi, to remote churches, a dramatic fortress and a 13th century Benedictine monastery. We sleep in a beautifully restored abbey and finish the holiday with three nights in the heart of the fascinating town of Gubbio, with its Etruscan, Roman and medieval history.



HIGHLIGHTS:

- Witness the historic annual crossbow festival in Gubbio
- Lunch at an organic olive oil farm
- See world-famous Piero della Francesca paintings



WALKING (LEVEL 3):

Terrain: Hilly terrain, most walking on dirt roads and woodland tracks. Challenging (optional) final walk on mountain trails

Shortest/Longest Day: 6km/3.8miles:18km/11.3miles





ETRUSCAN TRAILS IN CENTRAL ITALY

In the footsteps of an ancient civilization

9 Days START: Rome **FINISH:** Rome

This 8-night tour starts and finishes in the Eternal City and follows in the footsteps of the Etruscans – an ancient civilization which populated the centre of Italy long before the Romans. We visit UNESCO World Heritage tombs, walk along sunken Etruscan roads and explore the outstanding towns of Civita di Bagnoregio and Orvieto which were both important Etruscan settlements. Our hikes take us through the rolling landscape of central Italy, with its olive groves, cypresses and vineyards as well as to the tranquil waters of Lake Vico and Lake Bolsena. We finish in the Val d'Orcia, a strikingly beautiful valley in the southern part of Tuscany and home to some of Italy's most celebrated wines.



HIGHLIGHTS:

- Visit UNESCO World Heritage sites throughout the region
- Taste the noble wines of Montepulciano and Montalcino
- Follow sections of the historic Via Francigena pilgrim route to Rome



WALKING (LEVEL 3):

Terrain: We usually walk on strade bianche (gravel roads), woodland tracks and through farmland. This area of central Italy is relatively hilly, with some significant ups and downs, but not mountainous. There is van access at lunchtimes on all days so you can choose to walk a shorter day if required.

Shortest/Longest Day: 9.8km/6 miles: 17km/10.5 miles





THE WILDS OF ABRUZZO

Stunning Peaks and Silent Valleys

9 Days **START:** Rome **FINISH:** Rome

Lying just a short distance east of Rome the region of Abruzzo is wild, unspoilt and hauntingly beautiful. Our tour here explores all three of its national parks, which abound with wild flowers, chamois, deer, wolves and the rarely seen Marsican bear. We stay in remote villages, perched high on hilltops, surrounded by the majestic peaks of the Apennine mountains. Much of the region feels untouched by modern life and we explore some of its oldest culinary traditions. In spring it is carpeted with wild flowers before autumn paints the landscape red and gold and the ancient beech forests are at their most stunning. The Abruzzese people are extremely warm and hospitable which makes hiking in this part of Italy a truly unforgettable experience.



HIGHLIGHTS:

- Staying in the unique environment of Sextantio Albergo Diffuso
- Hiking in a region where time has stood still
- Cooking class of traditional Abruzzese specialities



WALKING (LEVEL 4):

Terrain: Hiking at altitudes between 1100m and 1800m. Mountain trails, woodland and farm tracks. Significant ascents/descents, especially on days 5 and 8

Shortest/Longest Day: 6.5km/4.1miles:17.5km/11miles



SOUTHERN ITALY

Basilicata: The land where time stood still

9 Days **START:** Naples **FINISH:** Naples

This tour explores the undiscovered region of Basilicata in the instep of the foot of Italy. Much of the region is completely untouched by the modern world and time seemingly stands still. We start in the pretty town of Maratea on the west coast before heading inland to the pristine Pollino National Park. Here we stay in the charming small town of Rotonda for three nights, surrounded by its magnificent scenery and fascinating history. The final stop of the tour is the unique UNESCO World Heritage city of Matera which, in 2019, was the European Capital of Culture. We stay in an Albergo diffuso, or "scattered hotel", with rooms carefully converted from the town's original cave dwellings, each with its own individual features and atmosphere. Our final walk explores the compelling history of this matchless city and the surrounding countryside.



HIGHLIGHTS:

- Sleep in a cave in the UNESCO World Heritage city of Matera
- Hike in the spectacular and untouched Pollino National Park
- Discover spellbinding wonders of this ancient land



WALKING (LEVEL 4):

Terrain: We walk on mule tracks, forest paths and rugged mountain trails as well as hiking in open pastures. There are some significant ascents and descents on this tour, with some up to 700m.

Shortest/Longest Day: 8km/4.9 miles: 16.5km/10.2 miles





THE HEART OF SARDINIA

From the Gennargentu Mountains to the Sea

8 Days **START:** Cagliari **FINISH:** Olbia

The second largest island in the Mediterranean, Sardinia is perhaps best known for its azure coastline and clear waters. However, the centre of the island reveals rugged mountains, Bronze-Age treasures and a cuisine which still follows the shepherds' traditions of centuries gone by. We start in the evocative town of Cagliari, on the southern coast of Sardinia, before heading inland to the Gennargentu mountains with their sweeping views of the dramatic landscape. We move to the east of the island, an area often overlooked by visitors, to explore hidden villages, pristine coves and high mountain panoramas. The tour finishes at Olbia airport, on the north-east coast, before we continue on to discover the captivating island of Corsica.



HIGHLIGHTS:

- Discover Sardinia's unique Bronze-Age sites
- Hike to the highest points on the island with unbroken views to the Mediterranean Sea
- Enjoy a traditional Sardinian lunch prepared by local shepherds



WALKING (LEVEL 3):

Terrain: We walk on strade bianche (dirt roads), mule tracks and some rocky mountain trails. There are some significant ascents and descents of up to 500 metres.

Shortest/Longest Day: 3km/1.8 miles: 14.2km/8.8 miles



THE ISLAND OF CORSICA

A Mountain in the Sea

8 Days START: Olbia or Bonifacio **FINISH:** Bastia

This 7-night tour explores the intriguing and endlessly fascinating island of Corsica. Turquoise seas, towering green pines and red granite rocks make this a landscape full of contradictions. We start in the colourful port of Bonifacio on the island's southern tip before heading up the west coast to Piana and the beautiful Gulf of Porto. Our final stop is the former capital, Corte, an historic town lying at the geographical heart of the island and encircled by a backdrop of monumental granite mountains. With an age-old determination to keep their island pristine and unspoiled, the Corsicans have maintained an environment which offers a true paradise for hikers.



HIGHLIGHTS:

- Hike in the pristine scenery of Corsica's granite landscape
- Enjoy the island's bounty – goat and sheep cheeses, cured meats, chestnuts and wild boar stews
- Follow a section of the famous GR20 long distance route across the island



WALKING (LEVEL 4):

Terrain: We walk on coastal paths, rocky trails and mountain tracks with significant ascents and descents (800 metres on Day 5 and 600 metres on Day 7).

Shortest/Longest Day: 5km/3.1 miles: 16km/9.9 miles



HEDONISTIC HIKING IN AUSTRALIA

Taster Weekends in Victoria

We usually spend the months of November to April in Australia and we like to offer a few taster weekends in the area where we live in Victoria. These are designed to give those who have not travelled with us before a chance to sample our style of holidays and our signature blend of food, wine and walking. They also provide an opportunity to meet up with old hiking friends from tours overseas or a chance to make new ones!

These hikes are based in Victoria's High Country in the north east part of the region. We strive to combine invigorating walking with points of local interest and some of the best-loved restaurants and wineries in the area. Examples of itineraries include hikes on Mount Buffalo which is a unique granite mountain close to the vineyards of the Ovens Valley, weekends with the Italian wine-growing families of the King Valley exploring the history of Ned Kelly and walks around Beechworth which is a wonderfully preserved gold-rush town but also the centre of Nebbiolo production in north east Victoria. The Bogong High Plains at Falls Creek are famous for their historic cattlemen's huts and hikes there offer panoramic views of the surrounding landscape.

Our weekends usually run between February and April, when the temperatures are starting to cool, and full details for the coming year are published on the website.





GREAT OCEAN WALK

Apollo Bay to the Twelve Apostles

We offer bespoke gourmet tours for private groups of 8 or more on the Great Ocean Walk, south-west of Melbourne. This 100 km trail from Apollo Bay to the Twelve Apostles has become one of Australia's iconic walks and guests who complete the hike finish with a true sense of achievement. Our fully-guided standard route takes seven days but we can tailor a shorter version if required. Accommodation along the route is selected based on group size and available budget, and we work closely with guests to design the optimum experience.

The best times to do the walk are late November/early December or March/early April but if you are interested please contact us well ahead of time so we can plan the perfect hike.



HIGHLIGHTS:

- One of Australia's iconic walks
- Dine in Chris's - Chef Hat restaurant near Apollo Bay
- Stunning wildlife and compelling history of the Shipwreck Coast



WALKING (LEVEL 3):

Terrain: Well-graded and maintained trail through coastal scrub, along beaches and in ancient forests. Lots of ascent/descent most days.

Shortest/Longest Day: 10.7km/6.8miles:
19.9km/12.5miles

WHICH HIKE TO CHOOSE?

The individual tour pages on our website give a detailed description of each itinerary and information about the walking. Below we have attempted to rate the tours in terms of difficulty, from **Level 5** being the most challenging, down to **Level 1** being the least. We have taken into account the amount of ascent and descent each day, the type of terrain and the length of each day in time and distance. The weather and altitude will also have an effect on the ease or difficulty of the hikes. If you have any concerns about the hiking please do get in touch. **We lead the tours ourselves so know the trails first-hand and can give individual advice about which tour we think would suit you best.**

We like to include some challenging hikes on all the tours but you will find these are balanced with more leisurely days. On all tours we have a support vehicle which meets us at lunch (there are a few exceptions in the mountains when there is no vehicle access and we carry a hike-in picnic) so there is the opportunity to walk a shorter day if required.

LEVEL 5:

Austria and the Dolomites, France and the Maritime Alps, The Best of the Italian Alps and The Mountains of Piedmont

- Several ascents/descents over 800m (and up to 1,000m)
- Some steep gradients
- Alpine regions with hikes often at altitudes over 1500m
- Rugged terrain – rocky mountain trails

LEVEL 4:

Southern Italy, The Italian Lakes, Slovenia and Friuli, The Wilds of Abruzzo and The Island of Corsica

- A lot of ascent/descent, including one hike in excess of 800m
- Occasionally at altitudes in excess of 1000m
- Some rugged terrain – rocky mountain trails and/or cobbled mule paths

LEVEL 3:

The Heart of Sardinia, Etruscan Trails in Central Italy, Northern Tuscany and Ravenna, Lucca, Volterra and the Island of Elba, Parma, Tuscany and the Ligurian Sea, Medieval Umbria and the Great Ocean Walk

- Distances in excess of 14km some days interspersed with shorter days
- Some rugged terrain/beach walking/steps
- One hike with ascent/descent close to 700m
- Significant amount of up and down each day

LEVEL 2:

Jewels of Piedmont, A Tuscan Harvest and The Australian Walking Weekends

- Well graded trails
- Many short ups and downs during the day
- May include one significantly more challenging day

LEVEL 1:

The Palio of Siena

- Ascents/descents up to 250m
- Terrain not challenging
- Half-day hikes (6km–9km)

WHAT WILL YOU NEED TO BRING?

Footwear

The most important thing is your footwear. We recommend a strong pair of waterproof walking boots with good ankle support, and these could be leather or a more modern lightweight waterproof fabric boot. It is essential to "wear in" your boots before embarking on the full week's walking holiday.

Clothing

The best advice for clothing is to wear layers. Modern high-tec fabrics for shirts and walking trousers are windproof but also very quick drying and two walking shirts in this fabric should be sufficient for a week. On top of the shirt a fleece will keep you warm - especially as temperatures can change swiftly according to altitude and wind chill factors. For hikes in the mountains we recommend a long-sleeved thermal vest/shirt. Walking trousers with zip-off bottoms which become shorts are extremely useful. A good quality waterproof jacket eg Gore-Tex with a hood is essential - the fabric is breathable as well as being watertight. Waterproof over-trousers might also be considered.

Hats and Sunglasses

A broad brimmed hat to shade your face from hot sun is very important and, if you are walking in mountains, you need to bring a fleece or wool hat and gloves. Sunglasses to protect your eyes

from the glare are another essential. We have our own range of branded hats and head bands which you can find on our website and buy from us on tour.

Walking Poles

Two strong lightweight poles can greatly improve your stability and reduce wear and tear on your muscles and joints. The best ones are made of carbon fibre but all poles should have comfortable handles with adjustable wrist straps. Poles are essential for the mountain hiking days in Abruzzo, Slovenia, Piedmont, Italian Alps, Southern Italy, the Italian Lakes, France and the Maritime Alps and Austria and the Dolomites - as well as on Australian tours. It is worth noting that Leki and Black Diamond make a compact version of poles to fit the smallest of suitcases.

Day Pack

We recommend a lightweight back pack, with capacity of approximately 20 litres, to hold your water bottle, extra layers of clothing, a camera and sunscreen and insect repellent. The most comfortable ones sit away from your back to allow a flow of air between you and the pack. In all cases it is a good idea to carry a large plastic bag to line the day pack and help to waterproof it, unless your back pack has a built-in waterproof cover.

Water Bottle

We give you BPA-free water bottles on the Italian tours, as this helps to reduce the needless waste of plastic. Other people like to use platypus water carriers worn in the back pack with the drinking tube. If you are joining a tour in Australia you will need to bring your own water bottle.

The Kit List page on our website gives further details.

"there is no bad weather, just inappropriate clothing"

Sir Ranulph Fiennes





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2020 TOURS & PRICES AT A GLANCE

APRIL	AUGUST
29 – 06 May The Italian Lakes PRICE: €3,095 SING SUPP: €325	12 – 18 The Palio of Siena PRICE: €3,025 SING SUPP: €350
MAY	SEPTEMBER
08 – 16 Etruscan Trails in Central Italy PRICE: €3,100 SING SUPP: €295 NEW	02 – 09 The Italian Lakes PRICE: €3,095 SING SUPP: €325
17 – 25 Lucca, Volterra and the Island of Elba PRICE: €3,025 SING SUPP: €325	08 – 15 The Heart of Sardinia PRICE: €3,050 SING SUPP: €275 NEW
29 – 06 June The Wilds of Abruzzo PRICE: €3,025 SING SUPP: €275	15 – 22 The Island of Corsica PRICE: €3,050 SING SUPP: €325 NEW
JUNE	23 – 01 Oct Southern Italy PRICE: €2,995 SING SUPP: €325
08 – 16 The Mountains of Piedmont PRICE: €2,995 SING SUPP: €275	25 – 02 Oct Parma, Tuscany and the Ligurian Sea PRICE: €2,895 SING SUPP: €275
17 – 25 Slovenia and Friuli PRICE: €3,025 SING SUPP: €275	OCTOBER
19 – 27 France and the Maritime Alps PRICE: €2,995 SING SUPP: €275	04 – 12 Slovenia and Friuli PRICE: €3,025 SING SUPP: €275
29 – 07 July The Best of the Italian Alps PRICE: €3,025 SING SUPP: €325	14 – 21 Northern Tuscany and Ravenna PRICE: €2,895 SING SUPP: €275
JULY	23 – 30 The Jewels of Piedmont PRICE: €2,895 SING SUPP: €275
09 – 17 Austria and the Dolomites PRICE: €3,025 SING SUPP: €325	

SEE THE WEBSITE FOR DETAILS OF OUR ANNUAL AUSTRALIAN TASTER WEEKENDS IN FEBRUARY AND MARCH.



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