



HEDONISTIC HIKING

The Mountains of Piedmont - 9 days

Protestants, Pilgrims and Alpine Panoramas

On this tour we explore 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. We hike in these high alpine valleys in the spring and return to the region in October for our more gentle Jewels of Piedmont tour.

What's Included?

- **8 nights accommodation** in two different hotels
- **2 experienced and knowledgeable guides** who will bring this stunning area to life
- **All meals** with wines
- **Gourmet picnics** each day with snacks en route
- **Support vehicle**, so you can walk as much or as little of the trail as you please
- **Transport** in two air conditioned minibuses
- Comprehensive **pre-trip information**
- **Museum visits and tastings** as per the itinerary

Tour Highlights

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

Accommodation

Il Mulino di Mattie: Surrounded by the mountains of the Alpi Cozie Natural Park, this cosy hotel has a welcoming, traditional restaurant

Antico Podere Propano: Very comfortable hotel in a former farm on the edge of the medieval town of Saluzzo, rooms set around a peaceful courtyard

Itinerary

DAY 1:

We meet in Turin at 10.30 am at the Hotel Concord, on Via Lagrange, which is a short walk from Turin's main train station. A brief drive takes us up into the Susa valley. We hike to Sacra di San Michele – a magnificent abbey perched on a rocky spur, dominating the Susa valley and enjoying views back to Turin. After lunch we enjoy a guided tour of the abbey, recognised as one of the symbols of the region of Piedmont. After the visit we drive to Mattie, a small village close to the city of Susa. Our accommodation for the next 4 nights is in a family-owned converted mill. Dinner in the wonderful hotel restaurant this evening. **(5.5km/3.4miles)**



DAY 2:



Our hike starts from a characteristic hamlet in the Orsiera Rocciavrè park. Walk through beech woods to arrive at the Charterhouse of Monte Benedetto situated next to a working farm. We climb alongside a stream to a mountain hut and continue past abandoned stone hamlets hidden in the woods to arrive at a clearing with a mountain refuge where we have our lunch. After lunch we descend to the end of the hike, passing a couple of pretty lakes. Dinner in a local restaurant tonight. **(15.5km/10miles)**

DAY 3:

We visit the Benedictine abbey of Novalesa with its beautifully preserved 11th century frescoes. The abbey was once an important stopping point on the Via Francigena pilgrim route. Our hike follows a section of the Via Francigena, climbing towards the Mont Cenis pass which leads to France. After lunch we return to the hotel. Later in the day we visit the city of Susa with its Roman monuments before dinner in the city. **(8.5km/5miles)**



DAY 4:



We drive through a beautiful chestnut forest to climb high into the Orsiera Rocciavrè park. We start our hike at a small alpine farm and climb through larch woods, crossing alpine streams to emerge above the tree line from where there are spectacular views down to the Susa valley. We continue climbing to arrive at the aptly named Marmot Meadow encircled by mountain peaks. After a picnic – which your guides hike in for you - we retrace our steps, enjoying wide open views and magnificent alpine flora. **(11.2km/6.9miles)**

DAY 5:



We depart the Val Susa after breakfast. A stunning drive takes us over the Col delle Finestre – made famous by Chris Froome with his spectacular comeback in the 2018 Giro d'Italia. After stopping to admire the view from the top of the pass at 2178m we continue, descending into the Chisone valley and onto the privately owned Castello di Bagnolo. Private tour of the gardens with their magnificent display of hydrangeas before lunch at the

Castle. In the afternoon we continue to the medieval gem of Saluzzo where we stay for the next 4 nights. Dinner tonight in Staffarda with its beautiful abbey.

DAY 6:

We drive high into the Val Varaita, starting our hike at the charming village of Chianale, one of the “Borghi piu Belli d'Italia”. Our hike takes us on a little trodden trail, climbing high above the valley with jaw-dropping views of Monviso and the lake at Pontechianale. We have our picnic as we descend towards the lake and continue hiking to Chianale in the afternoon. Time to visit the village before returning to Saluzzo. Dinner in a lively local restaurant this evening.

(12km/7.5miles)



DAY 7:



Today we explore the Val Pellice with its fascinating Valdese (Protestant) culture. We hike up alongside the beautiful Pellice river to an alpine meadow, descending via the spectacular Cascata del Pis waterfall. After a picnic lunch we visit the local museum before returning to Saluzzo. Dinner in a local restaurant. **(10.5km/6.5)**

DAY 8:

A beautiful drive up the fertile Po valley takes us to the foot of Monviso. From a mountain refuge we climb up on trails past pristine lakes enjoying magnificent views of Monviso and the Cottian Alps. Picnic en route which your guides hike in for you. In the afternoon we pass the source of the river Po at 2020m. Magnificent final dinner in a local restaurant in Saluzzo this evening. **(10.5km/6.5miles)**



DAY 9:

Return to Turin centre for 10.30 or Turin Airport for 11.30

Walking

Shortest day: 5.5km/3.4 miles

Longest day: 15.5km/10 miles

There are 7 days of hiking on this tour and although many of the distances are short there is a significant amount of ascent and descent (between 500-700 metres most days on rugged mountain trails), so a sound level of fitness is required. This is a mountainous region and, on most days, we hike at altitudes between 1000m and 2500m. Therefore, it is essential to be prepared for adverse and changeable weather conditions. On occasion, where there is no van access en route, both members of staff will accompany the group to provide extra support and to carry the lunch for you. Sturdy walking boots, with good ankle support, are essential. Walking poles are highly recommended, especially on steeper sections. We recommend that you arrive with all your equipment as opportunities to buy items along the route are limited. To see how we grade the walking we have a [simple comparison](#) of all our tours taking into account ascents/descents, distances and terrain.

Weather

Although the weather in late spring is generally mild with average temperatures in the low 20s we hike at altitudes between 1000m and 2,500m so it is important to be prepared for sudden changes in temperature and weather conditions.

Useful links to our website

[Turin](#) City Page

[Saluzzo](#) Blog Post

[Barbera](#) Blog Post

See all our [Tour Dates](#) for this and other tours

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