

# Great Explorations



## Trip Dates

**2012**  
Sep 5-11

**2013**  
Sep 4-10

Custom and self-guided trips also available and can start any date. Call or email for details.

## Total Days:

7 days/ 6 nights

## Arrive/Depart:

Siena / Chiusi

## Activity Level:

Moderate/Challenging  
20-40+ miles daily  
van supported

## Terrain:

1 day gently rolling, 3 days are moderately rolling, 2 days are hilly

## Cost:

**Land Cost (current year):**  
US \$2450  
Includes 6B/2L/5D

**Single Supplement:**  
US \$400

**Bike Rental:**  
US \$140

## Tuscany, Yoga & Biking "...regenerate the mind, body and spirit..."

Enjoy yoga and cycling? We do too, and have created an inspiring trip through the Tuscany countryside taking in Siena, Castellina in Chianti, Sovicille, Asciano and Pienza, each a delightful village. This journey will regenerate your mind, body and spirit; combine daily yoga sessions with invigorating cycling, pleasant walks and cultural interactions that will blend together to provide a truly memorable journey.

## Trip Highlights:

- Daily yoga sessions with teacher Ellee Thalheimer
- Cycling routes with options for moderate or more invigorating rides
- Enjoy spas for healing hydrotherapy and massage (additional)
- Learn ceramics at the Museo della Terracotta in Petroio
- Contemplate/meditate at the hermitage Sant'Anna in Camprena
- Sample wines from winemakers that have been doing so for hundreds of years
- Prepare a Tuscan meal

\* 2011 departure will be guided by [Ellee Thalheimer](#), who wrote the Lonely Planet guidebook 'Cycling Italy'. Ellee has been teaching yoga since 2001. See FAQ below for more.

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## Itinerary



### Getting there:

Siena: Most participants will arrive via Rome or Florence and spend the evening before our 'trip rendez-vous' in Siena .

### DAYS 1+2:

*Castellina in Chianti* - From Siena we cycle north through fields and vineyards. After lunch in a tiny village, we'll visit Radda on our way to Castellina; yoga will be offered, followed by hydrotherapy massage and a casual dinner at Il Fondaccio where a mouth-watering table of appetizers will greet you. On our second day we will begin with a yoga session followed by a swim and then cycle to Castle Meleto for a tour of this medieval *castello*. Back in Castellina, we taste wine at an *enoteca* followed by dinner. Our hotel in Castellina is a charming 3-star hotel in the center of this medieval town.



### DAY 3:

*Sovicille* - Our route takes us to Monteriggioni; with its perfectly preserved walls and cobbled streets you will find the charm immediate. Afterwards, continue with an invigorating climb and then lunch before descending to our hotel, a former monastery. Located in the countryside with a pool and surrounded by an extensive park, we will have an ideal setting for early afternoon yoga. Early evening, we will prepare a Tuscan meal here, learning to make pasta by hand.

### DAY 4:

*Asciano* - After yoga, we begin cycling with a gentle descent and then rolling hills west towards Monteroni d'Arbia for lunch. Along the way, you may have the chance to visit an eccentric artist who often invites us to his home - a castle filled with museum-class art. The day finishes with a ride (or shuttle) to the extraordinary Monastery Monteoliveto Maggiore, where a local guide describes frescoes here, painted by Signorelli and Sodoma in the 16th century.



### DAYS 5+6:

*Pienza* - Yoga to start and then west through the *Crete* region; in Petroio, we stop at the museo della Terracotta and learn about ceramics which have been made in this region for centuries. In Sant'Anna in Camprena, we will visit a fortified 14th century hermitage (you may recognize it from scenes in the movie *The English Patient*). Arriving to Pienza, you will delight in this true Renaissance place. Next day

we'll ride to Montepulciano and Monticchiello riding through a 'photographers's paradise'. Our hotel is quietly situated 150 meters from the central plaza and has large comfortable rooms and a casualness that you will enjoy. We'll complement our final evening meal with bottles of the local wines and toast our time together in Tuscany. *Viva dolce!*

**DAY 7 :** Transfer to Chiusi for trains onward.

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## FAQ:

### **What type of yoga is offered and do I need experience?**

Hatha yoga will be offered daily and all levels welcome. Yoga sessions will be 1h15-1h30 in length; some will be done indoors and some outside in suitable settings. If you wish to bring your yoga mat, then you can do so, but otherwise, we will provide.

### **What if I wish to practice yoga daily but my partner doesn't?**

The yoga is optional and if one partner prefers to 'sleep in' or depart early on bike, that is fine. Our morning sessions will be from 7h30-9h00 and we will depart on bikes around 9h30.

### **Are there any options for walking or hiking?**

We do have walking/hiking routes in this region and if you prefer to walk on certain days, this is possible.

### **What is the experience/bio of the yoga instructor?**

Elle's bio is listed with our other guides, but this additional description might give you further insight into the person that is Elle:

Daughter of a bike shop owner in Little Rock, AR, education, employment, and fancy have landed her all over the US and the world where her proclivity for biking has evolved into bicycle commuting, road cycling, working as a bicycle tour guide, national and international cycle-touring, endurance racing, and –for a short and sadistic stint- racing cyclo-cross.

Out of the saddle, Ellee has settled into being a massage therapist and yoga instructor in Portland, OR after many years working as a wilderness therapy guide and bike tour guide. She crafts her yoga classes specifically for cyclists as well as for any practitioner wanting a fun, focused class that strengthens the core and stretches body, heart and mind. She has taught Hatha yoga since 2001 and has trained in Kundalini and Hatha Yoga with Diane Wilson in Portland, OR and in Iyengar-based Vinyasa yoga at OM yoga studio in New York, NY. Her meditation training has embraced a number of styles: Vipassana, Kriya, and Shambhala Buddhist.

Additionally, she is a freelance writer and works for Lonely Planet guidebooks. She authored *Cycling Italy* and has contributed to two additions of *Mexico*, as well as the *USA*, *Caribbean*, and *Pacific Northwest* guidebooks.

## What's Included in the Cost of Your Trip?

- services of one or more experienced Great Explorations guides and support vehicle
- 6 nights lodging
- all breakfasts, 2 lunches, and all dinners but 1
- entrance fees for selected historical sites and museums
- cooking course with guest chef
- detailed map and route instructions
- all baggage transportation
- all transportation from initial meeting point to final drop-off (see arrive/depart cities)

Please note: Final itinerary is subject to revision; any changes made are done so in an attempt to provide the best possible trip given route conditions and available services. Due to the nature of our business and exchange rates, prices are subject to change. All prices quoted are U.S. dollars but we gladly accept payment in Canadian dollars also. Due to cancellations and waiting lists, trip availability fluctuates daily. If you have any questions or would like to confirm space on this trip before making your reservation, please contact us at [info@great-explorations.com](mailto:info@great-explorations.com) or by telephone at **604.730.1247**

# Great Explorations

## Accommodations



### **Palazzo Squarcialupi, Catellina**

A former palace from the 15th century, this is one of our favourite hotels in Italy. Enjoy private salons, a terrace with views over the magnificent Chianti countryside, large swimming pool set in the garden, and a Turkish bath. Sip wines produced in the antique wine cellars beneath the hotel using grapes from the vineyards extending around the village.



### **Villa Cennina, Sovicille**

This dignified villa sits on the ground of the Celsa Castle estate, in the hills south of Siena. Surrounded by a spacious garden, this country inn offers a large pool, tennis court, and driving range with putting green. Guest rooms offer traditional Tuscan furnishings complemented with simple yet elegant décor and boast splendid views from every window.



### **Hotel La Pace, Asciano**

Built in 2002 in the center of Asciano, this 3-star hotel offers modern rooms amid country character. Relax by the large swimming pool and grounds and enjoy traditional Tuscan cooking at tables "en plain air."



### **Hotel San Gregorio, Pienza**

This 3 star hotel is conveniently located steps to the historical district of Pienza in the heart of Tuscany. All rooms are finely furnished suites complete with sitting rooms and Jacuzzi tubs. A new swimming pool and restaurant were added in 2007 making this an extremely comfortable hotel.