

## **VIA FRANCIGENA (ITALY)**

### **LUCCA TO SIENA**

### **ITINERARY: 9 DAYS**

#### **Day 1**

##### **ARRIVE LUCCA**

Your journey begins in the captivating city of Lucca. We recommend you arrive early to allow enough time to explore its Romanesque churches, Renaissance sculptures and splendid gardens. Take a walk or bike ride around the tree-lined, red-brick walls that contain this elegant city for views over the Apuan Alps. Lucca's duomo, Cattedrale di San Martino, is well worth a visit, as is the impressive Piazza Anfiteatro, a 2nd century Roman amphitheatre. Dinner is on your own tonight and there are many dining options to choose from.

- Overnight: Lucca

#### **Day 2**

##### **LUCCA TO SAN MINIATO**

This morning you have some more time to enjoy Lucca before making your way by train (~1¼ hours) to San Miniato. Take some time this afternoon to discover why this town is considered one of the pearls of the Via Francigena. The seminary, from which the main square takes its name, has a unique facade; take a stroll past it in the evening when it is illuminated, before settling in to enjoy a local speciality of risotto with white truffle.

- Overnight: San Miniato
- Meals: B



### Day 3

#### SAN MINIATO TO GAMBASSI TERME (25KM, 7 HOURS)

Today's walk is gently undulating and takes you on a paved road from San Miniato through to olive groves, past vineyards and farmland crossing typical countryside of the Val d'Elsa. Along the way you will pass Pieve di Coiano, a parish church thought to have been built before 1000AD. The church is particularly significant due to a visit by Archbishop Sigeric on his journey from Canterbury to Rome.

The last half of the walk ventures along the top of rolling Tuscan hills with fantastic views of rustic farmhouses, fields of wheat, sunflowers and vineyards. As you near the town of Gambassi Terme you will pass Pieve a Chianni (the church of Santa Maria), a lovely Romanesque church that has been restored and is now a *ostello* (hostel). You will stop for the night in Gambassi Terme, a town known for its thermal baths and the thermal springs found in the area.

- 781m ascent, 654m descent
- Overnight: Gambassi Terme
- Meals: B, D

### Day 4

#### GAMBASSI TERME TO SAN GIMIGNANO (18KM, 6 HOURS)

Leaving behind the quaint village of Gambassi Terme, the trail today will take you along country roads, passing more vineyards and olive trees into sections of lush green forest. Keep your eye out for remnants of ancient Roman roads. Cypress lined paths with beautiful views of the rolling Tuscan hills either side of you lead to the town of Pancole, dominated by the Santuario di Pancole (Sanctuary of Pancole). Continuing on you will come across the working monastery of Pieve di Cellole. It is set amongst lovely grounds with panoramic views over the countryside. If a mass is not being held, you can visit the church and purchase some of the local farm produce or pottery. Even though you will be walking alongside the road as you approach San Gimignano, the views remain captivating as you look toward this evocative hilltop town where you will stay for the next two nights.

- 595m ascent, 540m descent
- Overnight: San Gimignano
- Meals: B



## Day 5

### SAN GIMIGNANO

Today, enjoy a full day at leisure to explore atmospheric San Gimignano. This walled medieval town is an absolute gem. We recommend taking your time to wander the narrow, boutique-filled streets, not forgetting to climb the Torre Grossa, the tallest tower of many. From the top, you will be rewarded with spectacular views over the UNESCO listed town and the surrounding hills.

Included this evening is a wine tasting that will offer you the opportunity to sample some of the local produce.

- Overnight: San Gimignano
- Meals: B

## Day 6

### SAN GIMIGNANO TO GRACCIANO (21KM, 6 HOURS)

Leaving the fairy tale village of San Gimignano this morning, the Via Francigena takes you along quiet, local roads, through farmland and a number of forested sections. The terrain can be uneven at times with tree roots and rocky sections, particularly on the forest trails. The trail meets and follows a stream with the clearest water, offering a place to swim during the warmer months.

A detour worth taking today is to see the fascinating Abbey of Santa Maria Assunta in Conèo; a Romanesque church built around the year 1,000 and located in the lovely surrounds of the Colle di Val d'Elsa.

Some of the areas you are walking through today and tomorrow were once underwater. If you look carefully, some sections of road have shell fossils embedded in them.

- 209m ascent, 204m descent
- Overnight: Gracciano
- Meals: B



## Day 7

### GRACCIANO TO MONTERIGGIONI (13KM, 4 HOURS)

From Gracciano you will walk along one of the more beautiful sections of the Via Francigena. Today's highlights include Pieve a Elsa and the ancient Etruscan *thermae* (thermal pools) of Caldane. Continuing on you will be able to admire the facade of the Pieve di Strove and Abbadia a Isola, a resting place for Archbishop Sigeric of Canterbury on his pilgrimage. There is no mistaking Monteriggioni as you approach. The small village is perched on a hilltop and is enclosed by medieval walls and 14 striking towers that make quite an impact on the landscape. Explore the narrow streets with its ring of vegetable gardens, houses and the Piazza Roma at the centre. Make sure you climb up on one of the walls to take in the view.

- 132m ascent, 57m descent
- Overnight: Monteriggioni
- Meals: B

## Day 8

### MONTERIGGIONI TO SIENA (20KM, 6 HOURS)

After breakfast, depart Monteriggioni on dirt roads through the Montagnola *Sense*, a hilly area of the region passing through the now deserted medieval village of Cerbaia. The trail today is gently undulating along wide gravel country roads lined with the iconic cypress pine. The landscape consists of large expanses of open, rolling hills dotted with castles, farms and forests; land that has seen many legendary battles between Siena and Florence. After a meditative walk through the Renai forest, you will pass through the *Porta Camollia*, the traditional pilgrims' entrance to the epic town of Siena. Situated along three ridges at the southern end of the Chianti hills, Siena is another UNESCO city not to be missed. The town explodes with excitement during the famous Palio horse race run several times over summer in Piazza del Campo. The striking Duomo is jam-packed with artworks by Bernini, Michelangelo and Donatello and is only one of many fascinating sites to explore during your stay. Walk the cobblestone streets of this vibrant town before soaking up the atmosphere of Piazza del Campo over a glass of prosecco and antipasto, and celebrating the end of your pilgrimage along the Via Francigena.

- 224m ascent, 245m descent
- Overnight: Siena
- Meals: B



## Day 9

### DEPARTURE DAY

After breakfast, you are free to leave for your onward journey.

- Meals: B
- Recommended additional nights: Lucca, Siena

