

Hidden Italy Tuscany 2 self-guided walking tour- San Quirico d'Orcia to Abbadia San Salvatore: 8 days / 7 nights:

Completely covered in oak, chestnut, beech and pine forests, Mount Amiata is one of central Italy's great natural resources. Rising nearly two thousand metres above the surrounding valleys to the east and the coastal plains of the Maremma to the west, its benign blue form serves as a backdrop for much of southern Tuscany. Amiata was believed to have been sacred by the Etruscans and the Romans, as well as the later Lombard invaders, who founded the magnificent abbey of San Salvatore near its peak in the 8th century.

The small settlements that grew around the castles ringing the mountain to protect the abbey today have become picturesque villages, while the paths that linked them (recently revitalised as clearly marked walking tracks that criss-cross the forests) provide you with a unique opportunity to explore one of Tuscany's hidden treasures. You'll be picked up at the beginning and dropped off at the end at the Chiusi railway station (on the Rome/Florence line).

The walks:

This is a Grade 3 walk ([click here for details](#)). Several of the walks are quite long, from 8 to 15 kilometres, and a couple (on Days 2 and 3) with sustained but not dramatic climbs. The paths are mostly over good unsealed country roads with regular markers. There are however some sections that follow smaller trails through forests and relatively uninhabited stretches, so you'll need to have a good sense of orientation and walking experience.

The accommodation:

Hidden Italy uses the best accommodation available. On the Tuscany 2 walk this includes two 4-star hotels, two three-star hotels, two family-run pensioni and a private apartment. All the accommodation is comfortable, welcoming and has private en suite bathrooms.

The food:

Being covered in pristine forests, Mt Amiata is particularly famous for its mountain cuisine: mushrooms, hams, truffles and game. Generous breakfasts are included each day. With notice, the hotels will be able to prepare a cut lunch for the walk. Dinners are three course meals alla carte (ie free choice) in some of the best restaurants in the area.

What's included in this walk?

- seven nights' accommodation
- all breakfasts and dinners
- reading lists and historical and cultural notes
- maps and detailed walking instructions
- daily transfers of baggage between hotels
- pick up at Chiusi (on the Rome/Florence rail line) and drop-off at the end in Chiusi
- 24 hour backup from local manager

Tuscany 2 self-guided walk Itinerary

Day 1

You will be picked up from Chiusi station on the Rome/Florence line and transferred to San Quirico d'Orcia. A staging point on the medieval pilgrim route to Rome and once the seat of the Imperial representative to Papal Rome, the quiet streets of San Quirico are rich with the evidence of the town's important past.

Day 2

The first walk follows a gravel country road across a ridge with views across the Orcia River valley, then down to thermal springs that have been used since Etruscan times, its unusual piazza (a vast thermal pool) dominated by a palazzo built by Lorenzo d'Medici. Crossing the river, you then climb up to a village under a ruined Medieval castle. (9 kms, 3.5 hrs)

Day 3

Following more gravel roads, you continue up through wheat and sunflower fields before joining a medieval pathway that takes you past a Renaissance fortress and an abandoned 12th century monastery and into the first of the mountain villages, hidden in one of the two remaining stands of Amiata beech. (13 kms, 4.15 hours)

Day 4

Today's walk is dedicated to the forest, following paths that skirt around the northern side of the mountain, via a 10th century hermitage, to a beautiful hill-top village. Clustered around the remains of an ancient castle, the village's quiet streets belie a violent past. It is well known for its pecorino cheese and its splendid botanical gardens, just outside the village (16 hectares of terraces dotted with almost 50 contemporary sculptures) that you can visit in the afternoon. (8 kms, 4.15 hrs)

Day 5

Continuing through the forests, today's walk takes you through two of the most interesting towns of the mountain, with breath-taking views across the valleys of the Ombrone and Orcia rivers. The first is best known for its sweets and superb bread, while the second was the birth place of Davide Lazzaretti, a 19th century mystic who led a proto-communist uprising on the mountain, coming to a sticky end at the city's gates in 1877. (15 kms, 5 hrs)

Day 6

Today's is an easy 15 km walk that largely follows unsealed country lanes and beaten trails. It offers spectacular views over Mt Amiata, the Maremma to the Tyrrenean Sea. On particularly clear days it is possible to see Elba and even the mountain tops of Corsica (so the locals say!). The first section of the walks takes you out around Mt Labbro, which has a marvellous lookout point, and then back to your hotel. The second section takes you on to a small village on the Fiora River. (15 kms, 4 hrs)

Day 7:

The first part of today's walk is panoramic, conturing around Mt Amiata before climbing up through the chestnut forests for which the mountain is famous. You finish in the square in front of the 5th century Abbey of San Salvatore. (13 kms, 4 hrs)

Day 8:

After breakfast, you will be transferred to Chiusi railway station.