

BACKROADS
THE WORLD'S #1 ACTIVE TRAVEL COMPANY

Tuscany

SPLENDID CYCLING IN THE HEART OF TUSCANY

TO RESERVE YOUR
TRIP CALL
800-462-2848 OR
SIGN UP ONLINE [HERE](#)



Important Facts
at a glance

8 DAYS, 7 NIGHTS

Click [here](#) for departure dates
and pricing details

ROUTE RATING

Levels 3–5

See [below](#) for details.

**IN BUSINESS FOR
29 YEARS,
BACKROADS IS
RECOGNIZED YEAR IN
AND YEAR OUT AS
ONE OF THE WORLD'S
TOP 10 TRAVEL
COMPANIES BY
TRAVEL+LEISURE**

If you dream of experiencing the full spectrum of Tuscany in a single vacation, this challenging eight-day cycling journey may be the perfect trip for you. Our itinerary showcases the region's diversity and highlights some of its most prized possessions—including those signature hills. Visit the beloved hill towns of Cortona and Pienza and ride past the famed vineyards and peaceful woodland of Chianti. Experience the wide-open landscapes of southern Tuscany, from the dramatically situated Etruscan town of Pitigliano to the hamlets of Montepulciano and Montalcino, where the incomparable VINO Nobile and Brunello wines are born. Off your bike, discover timeless Renaissance art and architecture refuel with hearty cuisine created from the finest local ingredients and relax in comfort at welcoming hotels. Join us for the best Tuscany has to offer.

DAY 1

Meet your Backroads Trip Leaders (the folks wearing Backroads T-shirts) **at noon outside the Siena train station. Please arrive dressed in your biking clothes or bring your gear in a small separate bag so you can change before the ride.** See “Arriving & Departing” for additional logistics information.

SHUTTLE TO PICNIC SPOT IN CHIANTI 30 MINUTES

SAN GUSMÈ LOOP 15 MILES (940-FOOT ELEVATION GAIN)

Benvenuti in Toscana! After meeting in Siena, we shuttle to a scenic spot in Chianti for a picnic lunch of Tuscan specialties. After your Backroads Trip Leaders fit your bike and give a brief demonstration of riding techniques and safety, set off on a rolling route through the Tuscan countryside. Follow cypress-lined lanes past manicured vineyards and olive orchards, with views of Siena's towers in the distance. End at Villa Curina Resort, our peaceful retreat in the Chianti hills. Enjoy a refreshing dip in the hotel's swimming pool or relax in your room before we gather for a wine reception, followed by a delicious Tuscan feast. *Lodging: Villa Curina Resort*

DAY 2

CHIANTI LOOP 51 MILES (2,500-FOOT ELEVATION GAIN)

SHORTER OPTION: RADDA 30 MILES (1,200-FOOT ELEVATION GAIN) WITH SHUTTLE

LONGER OPTION: LUCARELLI & BADIA A COLTIBUONO 61 MILES (3,600-FOOT ELEVATION GAIN)

ROUND-TRIP SHUTTLE TO SIENA 1 HOUR

Our first big day of riding takes you through some of the best-known towns of the Chianti region, starting with Lecchi. A stretch through dense oak forests leads up to Lecchi and continues along the ridgeline. Then enjoy a breezy descent before kicking into low gear for the climb to Radda, the former capital of the Antica Lega del Chianti (Chianti League) that today remains a center for Chianti Classico wine production. Continue pedaling to Castellina, another of the three principal towns of this famed wine region. This charming hillside village, offering commanding views of the Pesa, Arbia and Elsa River Valleys, served as a Florentine army outpost until the fall of Siena in 1555. Check out the old



VILLA CURINA RESORT
(2 nights) A restored 16th-century villa featuring traditional and modern furnishings, a large heated swimming pool, solarium and tennis court.
Curina
phone: 39-0577-355-630
www.villacurina.it

HOTEL SAN MICHELE
(1 night) A stately Renaissance manor house situated in the heart of town.
Cortona
phone: 39-0575-604-348
www.hotelsanmichele.net

HOTEL SAN SIMEONE
(2 nights) A stunning panorama of the Val d'Orcia and an inviting swimming pool are yours to enjoy at this beautifully restored hotel.
Rocca d'Orcia
phone: 39-0577-888-984
www.hotelsansimeone.com

SOVANA HOTEL AND RESORT
(2 nights) This atmospheric *albergo* offers elegantly furnished rooms, exposed-beam ceilings and terra cotta tile floors.
Sovana
phone: 39-0564-617-030
www.romantikhotels.com

**EACH YEAR,
3 OUT OF 4 OF OUR
GUESTS HAVE
PREVIOUSLY
TRAVELED WITH US OR
BEEN REFERRED BY
SOMEONE WHO HAS**

ramparts, fortress and arcaded walkway (the Via della Volte), then find a restaurant along Castellina's quaint main street where you can enjoy lunch on your own.

This afternoon the route reverses, heading back through the heart of the Chianti Classico region toward Curina for some of the area's most scenic riding. (If you're up for the challenge of 31 more hilly miles, continue on to Lucarelli.) Spin back into Radda and take a break from your bike to stroll around town and admire the variety of architectural styles, including Classical Medici villas and houses constructed from castle ruins. If you'd like an afternoon snack, stop at one of the many sidewalk cafés in the town's historic center. Tonight we shuttle to Siena and walk to the Piazza del Campo for a wonderful dinner at a cozy *osteria*, a favorite among locals. *Lodging: Villa Curina Resort*

DAY 3

CAMUCIA ROUTE 39 MILES WITH SHUTTLE (1,200-FOOT ELEVATION GAIN)

SHORTER OPTION: MONTE SAN SAVINO 19 MILES WITH SHUTTLE (900-FOOT ELEVATION GAIN)

LONGER OPTION: HOTEL SAN MICHELE 43 MILES (2,000-FOOT ELEVATION GAIN)

We leave Villa Curina today and ride the rolling hills on the outskirts of Castelnuovo Berardenga. The route continues into the Val di Chiana, through unspoiled meadows where snow-white Chianina cows graze contentedly. The beef is the main ingredient in one of Tuscany's most famous dishes, *bistecca alla Fiorentina* (steak grilled rare over charcoal, lightly salted with olive oil drizzled over the top). Your midday destination is the small town of Monte San Savino, where we're treated to a private ceramics demonstration by a local artist (the Val di Chiana is known for its unique ceramics—more ornate than the typical Tuscan-style pottery). Afterward enjoy lunch on your own at one of the cafés or bars in town—your Trip Leaders are happy to make recommendations.

This afternoon you'll tackle a few big rollers en route to Camucia and then descend to the valley floor, where flat country back roads afford views of Foiano della Chiana to the north and Cortona to the east. If you're up for one final climb, continue riding all the way to tonight's hotel in the hillside town of Cortona. After settling in at the Hotel San Michele, you have the rest of the afternoon and evening to explore town and dine on your own. *Lodging: Hotel San Michele*

DAY 4

ROCCA D'ORCIA ROUTE 42 MILES (3,600-FOOT ELEVATION GAIN)

SHORTER OPTIONS: SAN BIAGIO 25 MILES (1,200-FOOT ELEVATION GAIN) OR BAGNO VIGNONI 39 MILES (2,500-FOOT ELEVATION GAIN) (BOTH ROUTES INCLUDE A SHUTTLE TO THE HOTEL)

LONGER OPTION: PIENZA LOOP 54 MILES (4,200-FOOT ELEVATION GAIN)

This morning we spin into the Val di Chiana, enjoying a relatively flat section through fields and forests to Petrignano del Lago. But then it's back to business, with some of the most challenging climbs of the day just ahead. You'll encounter a short but steep ascent to Valiano, followed by a long gradual hill into Montepulciano, the highest Tuscan hill town. On the way, you'll be surrounded by the *Vino Nobile* vineyards and amazing views of sprawling fields. Once you get into town, feel free to wander its winding streets in search of hidden squares, Renaissance palaces and churches, and a restaurant or café to eat lunch on your own. There's also an *enoteca* just off the Piazza Grande where you can stop for a taste of the region's claim to fame, *Vino Nobile di Montepulciano*.

After lunch consider visiting Tempio di San Biagio, a pilgrimage church located just outside the town walls. It was designed by Antonio da Sangallo the Elder to rival the churches of Assisi, Lourdes and Santiago de Compostela. You can shuttle to our next



Top Reasons Why you should take this trip

We provide a variety of route options so you can do as much or as little activity as you like each day.

You don't have to sweat the details! Backroads takes care of everything—from making sure your luggage is waiting for you in your room to appearing with a cool drink or a lift when you need it the most—allowing you to enjoy a carefree vacation full of fun and relaxation.

Traveling with Backroads is about making connections: with places and people, history and culture, fellow travelers—perhaps you'll even discover something new about yourself!

Our Trip Leaders have undergone hundreds of hours of training and are the best in the industry.

**WHEN YOU SIGN UP
FOR A TRIP, YOU'LL
RECEIVE A
COMPREHENSIVE
TRAVEL PLANNER
WITH ALL THE
INFORMATION YOU
NEED TO PLAN
AND PREPARE**

hotel from here, or continue on your bike to Bagno Vignoni, known for its sulfurous hot springs—members of the Medici family and Saint Catherine of Siena once bathed here. Check out the Roman *piscina* (bath) in the town's main square and enjoy a quick coffee or gelato before continuing to Rocca d'Orcia. For more miles, bike the hilly option to Pienza, whose Renaissance architecture is unparalleled, thanks to the efforts of 15th-century Florentine architect Bernardo Rossellino. Pope Pius II dreamed of creating a model town with a single architectural scheme. He enlisted Rossellino to transform Corsignano (as Pienza was then known) into a city exemplifying Renaissance ideals. The town's focal point, the Piazza Pio II, with its Classically inspired Duomo, and the Palazzo Piccolomini are considered Rossellino's masterpieces. The ride ends in Rocca d'Orcia at our hotel, the San Simeone. This evening we enjoy dinner and a private wine tasting at a local bar and restaurant. *Lodging: Hotel San Simeone*

DAY 5

MONTALCINO LOOP 51 MILES (4,300-FOOT ELEVATION GAIN)

SHORTER OPTIONS: BUONCONVENTO 26 MILES (1,300-FOOT ELEVATION GAIN) OR MONTALCINO RIDE 35 MILES (2,800-FOOT ELEVATION GAIN) (BOTH OPTIONS REQUIRE SHUTTLE)

Today's challenging loop ride through the beautiful Val d'Orcia offers some of the most breathtaking scenery in all of Tuscany. You'll encounter some big ups and downs between San Quirico d'Orcia and Torrenieri. But the hills mellow as you travel through the valley past wheat and sunflower fields, on your way to San Giovanni d'Asso. Give it all you've got on the steep climb into Chiusure, and then let go on the downhill to Monte Oliveto. Spin past the white clay hills of the Crete Senesi—a surreal landscape best observed from the seat of a bike! Surrounded by pine, cypress and oak trees, the famous and serene monastery at Monte Oliveto is the perfect setting for a catered lunch. Beforehand you may be able to catch the guided tour of the monastery or explore on your own until it closes at noon.

The first part of this afternoon's route offers nice downhills into the town of Buonconvento. Then you're in store for a few rigorous climbs on your approach to the classic hill town of Montalcino. This stretch passes some of the best-kept vineyards in Italy, the source of southern Tuscany's prestigious Brunello wine. Park your bike in Montalcino and walk along the quiet streets, perhaps stopping at one of the numerous *enoteche* (wine cellars) for a sample of the local lifeblood. Back on your bike, continue to Castelnuovo dell'Abate and the Abbey of Sant'Antimo, nestled at the foot of Monte Amiata, Tuscany's highest mountain. Built at the beginning of the 12th century atop the ruins of an 8th-century monastery, the abbey is one of the most brilliant examples of Romanesque architecture in Italy. Continue downhill to Monte Amiata Stazione and then, after passing through Castiglione d'Orcia, you're in the home stretch! Tonight's dinner at a cozy restaurant hidden in a tiny nearby hamlet provides the perfect ending to the day. *Lodging: Hotel San Simeone*

DAY 6

ACQUAPENDENTE ROUTE 44 MILES WITH SHUTTLE (2,200-FOOT ELEVATION GAIN)

SHORTER OPTION: SAN CASCIANO DEI BAGNI 29 MILES WITH SHUTTLE (1,800-FOOT ELEVATION GAIN)

LONGER OPTION: SOVANA 61 MILES (3,500-FOOT ELEVATION GAIN)

We continue exploring the Val d'Orcia today, which is rich with rolling green pastures and explosions of red poppies in springtime, and circular hay bales strewn amid golden grain fields in summer and autumn. Ease into today's ride with a downhill and some flats on a



Backroads' route rating system is the most comprehensive and accurate in the travel industry. To find out how these ratings translate into varying levels of physical challenge and activity, please visit our Web site www.backroads.com and select the route rating button for the trip of your choice.

LEVEL 3
31-40 miles/day
3-5 hours/day

LEVEL 4
41-55+ miles/day
4-6 hours/day

LEVEL 5
56-75+ miles/day
5-7+ hours/day

**ASK FOR REFERENCES
FROM PAST GUESTS
WHO HAVE TAKEN THE
TRIP THAT INTERESTS
YOU**

nice 10-mile stretch through the countryside. Then make your way across several one-lane bridges interspersed with a few moderate to challenging ascents. Next stop: San Casciano dei Bagni, whose warm spring waters possess healing properties renowned since medieval times. The small town enjoys a thriving economy based on health tourism and agritourism, and is perfectly in synch with its beautiful natural environment. Here we enjoy a picnic lunch before getting back on the road.

From San Casciano dei Bagni, descend into a hushed remote landscape—enjoy several sections of gradual ups and downs, followed by a long downhill just when you need it. Then the hills taper off a bit for the shady stretch to Sorano. As you round a curve, the picturesque town comes into view, making quite a first impression from its perch atop the tufa rock cliffs. In Sorano, shop for crafts or find a place to sit with a gelato or cup of coffee. From here you can shuttle to our hotel in Sovana or tackle the longer option's fairly steep hills and winding downhill into a landscape of tufa rock caves that date back to Etruscan times. If you're tank's not out of gas, this option is, as the Italians say, "*vale la pena*" (well worth it)!

Later this afternoon, settle into the stylish Sovana Hotel and Resort, an old farmstead transformed into an inviting hotel. Tonight we shuttle to Pitigliano, a fairy-tale town set on high tufa cliffs and chiseled caves overlooking the bright green valley. After a fascinating private walking tour of town, we feast in typical Maremma style at a local restaurant.
Lodging: Sovana Hotel and Resort

DAY 7

MONTEMERANO LOOP 47 MILES (3,300-FOOT ELEVATION GAIN)

SHORTER OPTION: SATURNIA HOT SPRINGS ROUTE 30 MILES WITH SHUTTLE (2,100-FOOT ELEVATION GAIN)

After breakfast we head out of Sovana on a relatively level stretch that includes a nice descent. As you sail down the hill, take a moment to pull off the road and appreciate the view of Pitigliano—it's spectacular and a perfect photo opportunity! Back on your bike, climb one short but steep hill before the terrain flattens out, giving way to the sheep farms and quiet fields of Italy's Maremma region. Pass through Manciano or branch off on a loop that throws a few significant climbs your way, along with the pastoral scenery. Then it's time to hammer uphill once again, but you're rewarded at the top with a downhill and then rolling road all the way to Montemerano, where fragrant olive groves dominate the landscape. After a picnic lunch, the route continues down to the Saturnia Hotsprings, where you can soak in therapeutic waters used throughout the centuries by Etruscans and Romans. One more challenging climb looms ahead, but then it's all downhill back to Sovana. To celebrate the last night of our Tuscany biking adventure, we take a walking tour of town before sitting down to a festive farewell dinner at La Taverna Etrusca.
Lodging: Sovana Hotel and Resort

DAY 8

SHUTTLE TO ORVIETO 1½ HOURS

Enjoy a leisurely breakfast before we shuttle to Orvieto train station, where we say our goodbyes. Please see "Arriving & Departing" for end-of-trip logistics.

ARRIVING & DEPARTING

Please note that meeting and departing times provided here were current at the time of



Note

While the information presented here details this trip's planned routes, activities, accommodations, meeting and departing times, we are constantly seeking new opportunities to enhance this itinerary and your experience. Naturally, we will keep you up to date on any changes that may affect your arrival, departure or lodging.

ORGANIZE A BACKROADS PRIVATE TRIP FOR YOUR FAMILY, FRIENDS OR COLLEAGUES FOR THE TRIP OF A LIFETIME

Hotel Room Rate Guide (U.S. dollars per night)

Up to \$100	◆
\$101–200	◆◆
\$201–300	◆◆◆
\$301–500	◆◆◆◆
\$501 and up	◆◆◆◆◆

printing, but are subject to change. PLEASE DO NOT BOOK YOUR FLIGHTS UNTIL YOU ARE CONFIRMED ON YOUR VACATION AND HAVE VERIFIED THE DETAILS OF ARRIVING & DEPARTING WITH YOUR TRIP CONSULTANT.

MEETING TIME AND LOCATION

On the first day of the trip, meet your Backroads Trip Leaders at noon in front of the Siena's train station, located outside the city center. From here, we shuttle 30 minutes to our picnic spot in Chianti. Please arrive wearing your biking clothes or bring your gear in a small separate bag so you can change before the ride.

CONCLUSION OF THE TRIP

On the last day of the trip, Backroads provides a private coach shuttle to the Orvieto train station, arriving between 11:30 a.m. and noon. From here you can take the train to Rome, Florence or other Italian cities.

FLIGHT ARRANGEMENTS

This trip begins in Siena, Italy and ends in Orvieto, Italy. We recommend flying in and out of Rome's Leonardo da Vinci Airport (airport code: FCO; www.adr.it) and traveling by train to Siena at the beginning of the trip, then returning by train from Orvieto at the end of the trip. Or, if you plan to spend time in Florence (airport code: FLR; www.aeroporto.firenze.it) prior to the Backroads trip, you can fly into Florence and out of Rome (Orvieto's on the Rome train line) and easily take a train or bus from Florence to Siena.

For help arranging air transport to and from your Backroads trip, please work with your own travel agent, the airline directly or an online travel site. For assistance locating a travel agent, please visit www.backroads.com/gettingthere. (Note that most travel agents and online travel sites charge a fee for their consulting services.)

GETTING TO SIENA

By train: Trains to Siena from both Rome and Florence run frequently. The average travel time from Rome's Termini train station is 3 hours; from Florence, your trip will average 1 hour and 45 minutes. Please note that the Siena train station is located about 1½ miles outside the city center.

If you're flying into Rome: From Rome's Leonardo da Vinci (Fiumicino) Airport, you can take the Leonardo Express commuter train directly from the airport to the Roma Termini train station and catch a train to Siena. The Leonardo Express runs every half hour from 6:37 a.m. until 11:37 p.m.; average travel time is 35 minutes. Or, you can take a taxi to Roma Termini for \$50–\$60. (Supplements may be charged for excess luggage, late-night trips and on holidays.)

By bus: If you fly into Florence, you may prefer to travel to Siena via the large comfortable coaches that depart Florence's SITA bus station daily; travel time is approximately 1 hour and 15 minutes. The bus will stop at the Piazza Antonio Gramsci, in the center of town. Here you can take a bus or taxi to the train station down the hill. For bus schedules, prices and other details, visit the Web sites listed below:

- www.turismoverde.com/italia/trasport/bus.htm
- www.sitabus.it
- www.sena.it/index_e.htm

WHERE TO STAY BEFORE & AFTER YOUR TRIP

SUGGESTED ACCOMMODATIONS

For help arranging pre- or post-trip hotels in conjunction with your Backroads trip, please work with your travel agent or the hotels directly. For assistance locating a travel agent please visit www.backroads.com/gettingthere.

Of course, we also recommend extending your stay at any of the hotels that we visit on this trip; see the sidebar above for details.

Please refer to the Hotel Room Rate Guide in the sidebar for starting double-occupancy rates. Note that the chart reflects the Internet and/or Best Available rates, which were accurate at the time of printing, but **hotel rates are always subject to change**.

Rooms on the street tend to be noisy, so you might want to request a room overlooking the hotel's garden or courtyard. Make your reservations early during the busy season, as rooms are booked well in advance.

SIENA

HOTEL MINERVA

Located about 500 yards from the train station, the Minerva offers clean modern accommodations with wonderful views of Old Siena. Via Garibaldi 72; Phone: 39-0577-284-474; www.tuscany.net/minervasienna; 59 rooms. Rates: ♦♦

HOTEL VILLA LIBERTY

Formerly a 19th-century private villa, this charming hotel sits just outside Siena's historic center (about a 10-minute walk from Piazza del Campo). Guest rooms are simple yet tastefully decorated and offer all the standard amenities, including satellite TV, air-conditioning and mini bars. Viale Vittorio Veneto 11; Phone: 39-0577-44966; www.villaliberty.it; 19 rooms. Rates: ♦♦

HOTEL VILLA PICCOLA

The Villa Piccola is situated just a few hundred yards from Siena's train station (about a 20-minute walk from the historic city center). Guest room décor is traditional Tuscan, with bright fabrics and terracotta tile floors. In some rooms, exposed wood beams enhance the atmosphere. Via Petriccio Belguardo 7; Phone: 39-0577-588-044; www.tuscany.net/piccolasienna; 13 rooms. Rates: ♦♦

IL CHIOSTRO DEL CARMINE RESIDENCE

Charming and intimate, Il Chiostro is not your run-of-the mill hotel. Located in a restored 16th-century nunnery near the Siena Cathedral and Piazza del Campo, the hotel's authenticity and unique character is evident from the moment you arrive. You'll enjoy terrific views of the countryside, abundant breakfasts featuring warm croissants and cappuccino and a friendly and helpful staff available to make sure your stay in Siena is pleasant. Rooms are air-conditioned, spacious and comfortable, equipped with Internet connections and flat screen TVs. Via della Diana, 4; Phone: 39-0577-223-476/885; www.chiostrodelcarmine.com; 18 rooms. Rates: ♦♦♦

JOLLY HOTEL SIENA

The modern and comfortable Jolly Hotel is conveniently located on Piazza La Lizza,

within easy walking distance of Siena's bus terminal. Piazza La Lizza; Phone: 39-0577-382-111; www.jollyhotels.it; 111 rooms. Rates: ◆◆◆

PALAZZO RAVIZZA

A Karen Brown favorite situated within the city walls near Siena's historic center, this former Renaissance palace was converted into a hotel in the 1920s. Rooms 14 and 11 overlook the peaceful garden, which provides a tranquil escape from the bustle of the city. Each guest room features high ceilings, antique furniture and big windows, and while the rooms vary in size, each has a charm all its own. Pian dei Mantellini 34; Phone: 39-0577-280-462; www.palazzoravizza.it; 30 rooms. Rates: ◆◆◆

ROME

ALIMANDI HOTELS

The Alimandi brothers' friendly original establishment might just be the perfect spot if you'd like to stay close to the Vatican Museums. The **Hotel Alimandi Tunisi**'s décor leans toward "Roman kitsch," with frescoes, statuary, illuminated fountains and even a white baby grand piano. Take in the spectacular view of St. Peter's Basilica while enjoying breakfast on the hotel's terrace. Via Tunisi 8; Phone: 39-06-39-723948; www.alimandi.it; 35 rooms. Rates: ◆◆◆

Located across from the original Hotel Alimandi, the luxurious **Hotel Alimandi Vaticano** opened in 2002 and offers spacious Liberty-styled guest rooms that face the entrance to the Vatican museum. It also offers a rooftop terrace where you can relax and enjoy the sun and views over the Vatican walls. Viale Vaticano 99; Phone: 39-06-39-723941; 21 rooms and 3 suites. Rates: ◆◆◆

BEST WESTERN HOTEL CANADA

Built in 1870 to house the officials of Castro Pretorio and conveniently located near Rome's Termini station, this recently restored hotel offers all the amenities you would expect to find at a member of the Best Western group. Air-conditioned rooms are decorated in period furnishings and include satellite TV and Wi-Fi connections. The hotel also features a restaurant and bar, a small library and a living room with a fireplace, a great place to unwind after a day of sightseeing. Via Vicenza 58; Phone: 800-780-7234 or 39-06-44-57770; www.bestwestern.com; 70 rooms. Rates: ◆◆◆

HOTEL SANTA MARIA

Located in the Trastevere quarter, this former 16th-century convent is within walking distance of Campo de' Fiori and Piazza Navona. Few tourists venture to the Trastevere, which is unfortunate because it's a wonderful neighborhood with a bohemian spirit, tiny streets, artisan shops, great restaurants and an active nightlife. Owners Paolo and Valentina have created a romantic oasis complete with bright and cheery guest rooms, a cozy breakfast area and a wine bar. Vicolo del Piede 2; Phone: 39-06-58-94626; www.htlsantamaria.com; 18 rooms. Rates: ◆◆◆

HOTEL TEATRO DI POMPEO

This quaint simple property resembles a Tuscan farmhouse with wood-beamed ceilings and red-tile floors and was constructed over the ruins of the Theatre of Pompey, the site on which Julius Caesar was assassinated in 44 B.C. One section of the theater excavation includes a cave-like room that now serves as a breakfast nook. The guest rooms are spacious, pleasant and quiet. Largo del Pallaro 8; Phone: 36-06-68-72812;

www.hotelteatrodipompeo.it; 13 rooms. Rates: ♦♦♦

HOTEL LORD BYRON

Boasting a superb location near the Borghese Gardens, Via Veneto and the Spanish Steps, this small boutique hotel is a peaceful oasis amid the bustle of Rome. Drawing a distinguished and loyal following, this Karen Brown favorite and member of Leading Hotels of the World has received accolades for its refined Art Deco décor, accommodating staff and exceptional setting. For a special treat, dine at the hotel's exclusive restaurant, Relais le Jardin. A minimum two-night stay is required. Via Giuseppe De Notaris 5; Phone: 39-06-32-20404; www.lordbyronhotel.com; 32 rooms. Rates: ♦♦♦♦

FLORENCE

RESIDENZE JOHLEA & JOHANNA

While Florence has no shortage of outstanding hotels, it's also full of charming and elegant residence inns. We recommend any of the Johlea & Johanna properties, which are Karen Brown favorites. All are in excellent locations in unique buildings (a 19th-century villa, for instance, or a 1920s garden townhouse), attentive staff, lovely furnishings and a cozy friendly atmosphere. On the Web, visit www.johanna.it. **Please note that credit cards are not accepted at any of the Residence Johlea & Johanna listed below. The residences are not staffed overnight, so you must check in by 7 p.m. Because Residence Johlea & Johanna are such well-priced accommodations located in the city center, advance booking is key to securing a reservation.**

Johlea & Antica Johlea: Via San Gallo, 80 and 76; Phone: 39-055-463-3292; 12 rooms. Rates: ♦♦

Johanna I: Via Bonifacio Lupi, 14; Phone: 39-055-481-896; 11 rooms. Rates: ♦♦

Johanna II: Via Cinque Giornate, 12; Phone: 39-055-473-377; 7 rooms. Rates: ♦♦

TOURIST HOUSE Ghiberti

Superbly located behind the Duomo, this guest house is named for Renaissance sculptor Lorenzo Ghiberti, who crafted Florence's baptistery doors and whose studio was once located just below the hotel. Owners Christelle and Claudio, longtime hoteliers, have attended to every detail: Modern touches include keyless entries, a computer with Internet connection in all five rooms, a sauna and a Jacuzzi. Via M. Bufalini 1; Phone: 39-055-26-1171; www.touristhouseghiberti.com; 5 rooms. Rates: ♦♦

DAVANZATI HOTEL

The three-star Davanzati is a wonderful family-run hotel that gets high marks for the personal attention offered by the friendly helpful staff. The décor is pared-down Tuscan elegance with terra cotta tiled floors and wrought iron beds. It is situated within a typical 15th-century Florentine building right next to the Museo Palazzo Davanzati. Via Porta Rossa 5; Phone: 39-055-28-6666; www.hoteldavanzati.it; 21 rooms. Rates: ♦♦♦

HOTEL IL GUELFO BIANCO

The three-star Hotel Il Guelfo Bianco may not be deluxe, but if you're looking for a pleasant place to stay in the heart of Florence, *Karen Brown's Guides* thinks this is it. The personal touch of owner Alessandro Bargiacchi is seen and felt as soon as you cross the hotel's threshold. Just 200 yards from the Duomo, it offers individually decorated guest

rooms—some overlooking the quiet courtyards and roofs of the Via Larga—with marble-topped desks, antique furniture and exposed-beam ceilings. Some rooms feature painted wood or frescoed ceilings and carved wooden doorways. On the ground floor, you'll find a bar and a reading room. Via Cavour 29; Phone: 39-055-28-8330; www.ilguelfobianco.it; 40 rooms. Rates: ♦♦♦

RELAIS UFFIZI

Karen Brown's Guides recommends the Relais Uffizi, whose location is truly hard to beat. Stumble out of bed, and you're in the beautiful Piazza della Signoria and easy walking distance from the main museums and other points of interest. The atmosphere at this cozy family-run hotel is so warm and informal, you may actually feel like you're staying at the home of old friends. Guest rooms are furnished with antiques and vary in shape and size. Street noise is to be expected in such a prime location, so keep this in mind if you are a light sleeper. Chiasso del Buco 16; Phone: 39-055-26-76239; www.relaisuffizi.it; 13 rooms. Rates: ♦♦♦

ALBERGOTTO HOTEL

A recent renovation has given new life to the delightful Albergotto, a former gathering place for European literati and musicians. Light wood floors give the place a fresh lift, while antique furnishings and walls in mustard hues lend an elegant cozy touch to spacious guest rooms. With an enviable situation on the fashionable Via de'Tornabuoni overlooking the magnificent Palazzo Strozzi, the hotel is a great base from which to explore the city. It is an excellent choice, according to Karen Brown, with a friendly staff and all of the modern amenities. Via de'Tornabuoni 13; Phone: 39-055-239-6464; www.albergotto.com; 22 rooms. Rates: ♦♦♦♦

J.K. PLACE

This delightful and unexpected find is situated in the heart of Florence on the Piazza Santa Maria Novella. The hotel has a sleek stylish décor with a fashionable cream and gray color scheme and 1950s-style lamps. It maintains an atmosphere of Old-World warmth and hospitality however by combining these ultra-chic touches with traditional elements such as classical sculpture and a marble Louis XVI fireplace. The space lives up to General Manager Ori Kafri's goal of "precious details and impeccable service." It's an atmosphere that perfectly complements Florence. After a day of discovering the city, you'll find yourself eager to retreat to J.K. Place to relax and enjoy the views from the rooftop terrace. Piazza Santa Maria Novella 7; Phone: 39-055-264-5181; www.jkplace.com; 20 rooms. Rates: ♦♦♦♦

ORVIETO

HOTEL PALAZZO PICCOLOMINI

Located in Orvieto's medieval quarter, the family-run Piccolomini offers easy access to the Santa Maria Cathedral and the shopping area of Piazza della Repubblica. This restored 16th-century building overlooks the Piazza Ranieri, and guest rooms are elegantly simple with missionary-style wood furnishings. Rooms on the ground floor feature vaulted ceilings, while most of those on the upper floor offer views. Piazza Ranieri 36; Phone: 39-0763-341-743 or 391-014; www.hotelpiccolomini.it; 29 rooms; 3 suites. Rates: ♦♦♦

HOTEL DUOMO

Just steps from Santa Maria Cathedral, Hotel Duomo offers comfortable rooms and a welcoming atmosphere. The individually decorated guest rooms feature furnishings

designed by Maestro Livio Orazio Valentini, one of Orvieto's best-known contemporary artists. Vicolo di Maurizio 7; Phone: 39-0763-341-887 or 393-849; www.orvietohotelduomo.com; 18 rooms and suites. Rates: ♦♦

LOCANDA ROSATI

Located just a few kilometers from Orvieto, this typical stone country house offers terrific views of the city. Guest rooms are spacious, with simple but refined furnishings. Giampero, and his sister Alba, along with their respective spouses, have transformed their family farmhouse into this charming bed and breakfast, which gets raves from *Karen Brown's Guides*. The property has an inviting swimming pool and some of the most delicious food, prepared by Alba's husband, Paolo. 13 Via Garibaldi Phone: 39-0763-341-246 or 342-271; www.argoweb.it; 37 rooms. Rates: ♦♦

We hope you've found this information useful, but nothing substitutes for speaking with one of our experienced Trip Consultants. Please call 800-462-2848 Monday-Sunday, between 7 a.m. and 5 p.m. Pacific time.