

Hi there!

I hope this note finds you happy, healthy and enjoy a fantastic summer! I've been thinking—isn't it about time we take a much-needed break from the daily grind and go on a little vacation? Imagine a getaway where your only responsibility is to show up and the only type of decision you have to make is whether to have two scoops of gelato or three. Imagine being outside and active all day long and then feasting on fabulous pasta, cheese, bread and chocolaty things every night. And don't get me started on the wine... You know what I'm suggesting don't you. C'mon—we've been talking about it forever. It's time to actually do it: Let's go biking in Tuscany!

I'm organizing a private girls-only Tuscany biking trip with Backroads this October, and I'd be thrilled if you could be a part of it. Since moving back home after my two-year-long ex-pat experience, I'm more aware than ever how important it is to spend quality time with close friends—just like you. And talk about quality: I've traveled with Backroads before, and there's no one I trust more. They're absolutely top notch.

So, a bit about the trip: It's "A Taste of Tuscany North of Siena." It meets and ends in Florence, which is easily accessible by train from Rome's international airport. (We'll definitely have to spend some extra time in Florence before or after the trip—there's so much to see!) It's gorgeous countryside riding on quiet roads past vineyards, olive groves, golden wheat fields, crumbling villas and cypress trees. Imagine riding through a postcard—it really is "quintessential Italy." The main towns we'll hit during the trip are fantastic: Gaiole, San Gimignano, Volterra, Montalcino.

I must warn you, these are all hill towns. Yes, that's HILL towns. But, before you panic, think about this: Backroads trips are fully van supported, so if you don't feel like biking all the way, the trip leaders will pick you up en route and drop you off in town (or back at the hotel, or wherever). And it's not a race—you'll have all day to get from point A to point B with plenty of photo-op stops, espresso and gelato breaks, art and architecture viewing, wine tasting, shopping and whatever else happens to be of interest along the way. (But if you feel like hammering and biking every kilometer of every day, you can do that, too!)

Our accommodations will be spectacular, including a renovated medieval mill, a former Franciscan convent, and a four-star hotel with stables, an oil mill and dramatic valley views. The cuisine is pure Tuscany: pasta, pizza, *cinghiale*, *pecorino*, *prosciutto* and lots of Chianti Classico.

We meet in Florence at 10 a.m. on October 8; the trip ends back in Florence around noon on the 13th. I've attached an itinerary with all the details to get you even more psyched.

You've got six months to get in shape, but only 30 days to make a commitment. Once you've decided YES, you'll need to send make a deposit to reserve your space. The Private Trips Manager will gladly answer any of your questions (800-462-2848).

I hope you can join me on what I'm sure will be a once-in-a-lifetime adventure!