



CASTLES AND HILLTOWNS

This family of 2 parents and 2 children (aged 7 and 10) with a moderate budget were interested in showing as many ancient castles to the kids as possible during a 4-day stay in Tuscany's Chianti wine region, located between Florence and Siena. Along with castles naturally come hills and hilltowns...so the itinerary in turn features an array of the same. The children delighted in noticing similarities and differences in the various medieval castles and fortifications, and climbing as many towers as possible! They even prepared for the trip in advance by reading up on castles and medieval life and culture, from specialized children's books (we provided a suggested reading list; books are available from online vendors in US). Let the hunt begin!

Includes ideas for day-trips to **Chianti villages and monuments, Siena, San Gimignano, Monteriggioni, Montalcino.**

We have included a detailed **road map** of Tuscany. You'll be glad you have it when you take the occasional (inevitable) wrong turn. Unfortunately, country roads are sometimes sporadically marked so that a map is essential.

We also highly recommend a GPS with Italy maps to facilitate your navigation (they can usually be rented with rental cars, or bring one over from US with Italy maps). Using both GPS and folded road map together is the best plan for navigating Italy's roads.

DAY 1

RENTAL CAR PICK-UP

Saturday, June 14

9:00 AM

Pick-up rental car at **Europcar** Florence downtown location, Borgo Ognissanti, 53-55R.

Take taxi to agency (ask hotel to call for you). See voucher for details.

Drive south towards hotel in Chianti area (driving directions included in packet).

TUSCANY HOTEL

Castello di Meleto

Loc. Meleto

Gaiole in Chianti (SI)



ANTICO SOLE ITALY

Website: www.castellomeleto.it

Arrival: June 14

Departure: June 18

4 nights

You are reserved for an apartment sleeping 4 people. Prices include VAT, breakfast and castle winery tour with wine tasting (arranged ahead or upon check-in).

Formerly a fortress-castle, this fascinating and history-filled country inn provides a comfortable base from which to explore the Chianti wine region and the rest of Tuscany. The hotel enjoys a beautiful location: smack in the middle of the idyllic Tuscan countryside with its rolling hills and cypress trees, yet not far from village Gaiole for restaurants and errands. The imposing castle has a rich history dating back to the Middle Ages. It also features a winery; be sure to ask for a tour of the castle and winery. Relax and enjoy!

Driving Directions:

Arriving at hotel from Florence hotel:

Detailed directions included in client itinerary.

Faster route:

Detailed directions included in client itinerary.

Slower, pretty wine road route:

Detailed directions included in client itinerary.

On the drive from Florence to hotel, stop off at one or two of the **Chianti wine villages** or monuments in order to break up the trip and soak up stunning views. There should be time for a quick stop at **Greve in Chianti** which you pass on the drive, for a cappuccino and pastry in the charming main piazza (return later in week if you want to shop at the iconic Macelleria Falorni butcher shop for salumi and cheeses, or try small portions of local wines in fun automated machines at Le Cantine).

Near Greve – just a few km before town as you approach from Florence – are two historical castles (now both wineries): **Castello di Vicchiomaggio** and **Castello di Verrazzano**, home to navigator Giovanni da Verrazzano for whom the bridge in NYC is named. Winery tours can be arranged at both for later in week.

Just outside of Greve is a picturesque medieval hamlet called **Montefioralle**, worth a stop for glimpses of quaint medieval houses and fortification walls – or at very least the views of the charming townscape from afar. Take a few minutes to stroll the streets and soak up the feel of ancient history.

www.montefioralle.info

Onwards, drive south towards **Radda in Chianti** (driving directions included in packet) where you have an appointment for lunch at the medieval hamlet of **Castello di Volpaia**:

CASTELLO di VOLPAIA LUNCH

Saturday, June 14

1:00 PM

Castello di Volpaia

Localita' Volpaia, Radda in Chianti (SI)

Web: www.volpaia.com

This medieval hamlet features a winery, enoteca/restaurant and apartment accommodations.



Your lunch will be served at the **Volpaia BioEnoteca** offering a select menu of organic wine and food. Outdoor seating available when weather allows – recommended in summer!

Driving Directions:

Detailed directions included in client itinerary.

The tiny medieval town of **VOLPAIA** is an absolute gem. Volpaia is not hard to reach (7 km south of Panzano or 7 km north of Radda - take the small winding by-roads following signs for Volpaia, watching closely for signs). It's a wonderful little medieval hamlet – something that you would imagine from a fairytale. Wander around the tiny streets and stony arcades of this enchanting town for a relaxing, picturesque stroll.

Volpaia is one of our favorite places in Tuscany.

The Castello di Volpaia has become a winery, though you could never tell except for the wine shop out front. Shop for the famous wine, honey and vinegar from Volpaia inside the **wine shop** under the main tower. I especially recommend the **vinegar**, which comes in many infused flavors (good gift). A pair of small bottles of olive oil and vinegar packaged inside a wooden box stamped with Castello di Volpaia's logo makes a nice affordable gift.

COUNTRY WALKS

The Volpaia wine shop sells an excellent booklet outlining a variety of scenic walks you can take in the trails surrounding the hamlet. Booklet (in English) includes maps and clear, step-by-step directions for several walks of varying lengths, depending on how much time you have to spend. Walks range from 30 minutes to 2 hours. Recommended for a special experience.

On the drive south from Volpaia towards hotel, just beyond Radda in Chianti:

SHOP - FARM

Chianti Cashmere Company

Azienda Agricola La Penisola – Radda

www.chianticashmere.com

This wonderful farm produces a variety of articles made from goat's milk (*not* cheese). The only cashmere-goat breeder in Italy happens to be an American, Nora Kravis, and she has created a line of beauty products made from goat's milk: soaps, sunscreen, shampoo...they also make cashmere scarves and blankets. Generally open from 4-7 PM in high season, or call ahead. Good for kids as you can see the cute goats.

Stop off on drive to hotel or, if pressed for time, later in week.

The itinerary continues for the next 3 days with visits to more Chianti castles, as well as **Monteriggioni** the fortified hamlet with several towers located a few km outside Siena.

Naturally the hilltown of **Siena** is included, with a tower-climb of the soaring Palazzo Pubblico in the main square, together with an afternoon stop at **San Gimignano**, another medieval hilltown featuring several tall towers resembling medieval skyscrapers – the so-called “Manhattan of Tuscany.” One of these towers can be climbed for breathtaking views.

We purposefully left the final day open for the family to relax and enjoy hotel pool and grounds, or to engage in a day-trip to one of the suggested “do-it-yourself” options we gave them – top on our list being the hilltown of **Montalcino**, just over an hour's drive south of hotel in the glorious Val d'Orcia rolling hills.



The town is marked by an imposing fortress-castle; you can climb the ramparts for glimpse inside castle-life and spectacular views over valley.

Another notable bonus of this pretty medieval town is its famous red wine **Brunello di Montalcino**, produced in the area and available for tasting and purchase in a variety of wine bars throughout town. An absolute must-do...*salute!*

Lunch and dinner reservations made when requested by clients; some meals were purposely left open for clients to decide on trip. The itinerary is completed with a select list of **other interesting sights to see in Tuscany** (along with useful information like driving directions, opening hours, pricing and websites); suggested **shopping ideas** including stores selling local products; select **restaurant list** and **What do Eat in Tuscany** regional food list.

The full itinerary includes a detailed **foldout map** of Tuscany with essential sites marked.

