



# Florence, Siena and Tuscany

## Country

Italy

## Region

Tuscany

## Instructor

Jonathan Maher

## Dates

06 Sep > 13 Sep 08

## Price

£1420.00

## Overview

Both Florence, Siena and the landscape of Tuscany are known to many people. Travel programs, films and books have talked extensively about Tuscany and yet the desire of spending some time amongst so much beauty is still in the heart of so many of us. Visiting Florence is breathing the dawn of civilization as we know it today. Walking side by side with history we will embrace all that Florence was and still represents to the modern traveler. Siena with its strong colours will remind us of the power it enjoyed in the past. Cobble streets, statues and towering palaces will then lead us toward the gentle landscape of the Val d'Orcia in the south of Tuscany where the eyes can rest on a palette of mild autumnal colours and shapes, craftily sprinkled by stunning stone villages. The air, the food, the wine and the conviviality of people will only further accentuate an already near perfect destination.

## Itinerary

### What is Included

Five full days tuition  
Six nights of accommodation (own room with en suite)  
Breakfast is included on all mornings whilst in your hotel  
Transfer from Tuscany to Florence airport on departure day  
Transport around Tuscany during the tour  
Entrance to any exhibits or monuments on the course itinerary  
Welcome and farewell dinners on first and last night

### What is Not Included

Air travel to workshop location  
Transfer from airports to hotel in Florence on arrival day  
Film & other photographic materials such as memory cards film or processing  
Lunch & dinner unless specified otherwise

## Calendar



### Sunday 7th September 2008 - ARRIVAL DAY

Today is your arrival day in the splendid city of Florence. After arriving at your hotel, settling into your rooms and freshening up, we'll be meeting for a brief orientation, welcome drinks and dinner together in one of the city's typical medieval style 'osteria' (traditional restaurant)

### Monday 8th September TOUR DAY 1

The next day will be spent exploring Florence, its cobblestone streets and imposing monuments. We'll enjoy the quiet streets of this truly amazing city, we'll stop and savour Florentine life at the feet of Michelangelo's David. We'll explore the magic of light as it falls on the Piazza della Signoria - the open air museum created by the Medici Family. We'll take an early morning walk to the Ponte Vecchio, alongside the River Arno to capture the early rays bathing the many jewellery shops opening up for their day of trade as they have done for more than five centuries. Towards the afternoon we'll go up to Piazzale Michelangelo to see the most famous sunset panorama, as the light sets behind Brunelleschi's Dome. We'll visit the Romanic church of San Miniato al Monte and stop for the evening Gregorian chant performed by the resident monks. The Giotto tower and the Duomo will be our neighbouring monuments, visible also from our hotel rooms. Whilst in Florence we'll take you to our favourite restaurants and all the secret places that our Florentine friends have revealed to us over the years.

### Tuesday 9th September TOUR DAY 2

After breakfast we'll be saying our goodbyes to Florence and make our way to the Unesco protected area of the Val d'Orcia where we'll be staying for the next four days. On our way to our next destination we will stop in Siena and explore this marvel of a city. We'll walk through long and narrow streets dotted with ice cream parlours and fragrant bakeries. Siena is an explosion of red. The colours of the medieval brick houses reflects on the streets and the shop windows giving out a warm light all around it. We'll visit the Duomo and spend some time in Piazza del Campo where we suggest you climb up the Torre del Mangia, the second tallest tower in Italy. We'll have lunch together at one of our favourite restaurant overlooking the Palazzo Pubblico.

We'll arrive at our country hotel in the early afternoon where we'll have some time to relax and unwind. In the later light of the afternoon we'll start our exploration of one of the most beautiful landscapes on earth.

### Wednesday 10th September to Friday 12th September TOUR DAY 3 to TOUR DAY 5

We'll have the chance to photograph all the iconic locations that made Tuscany famous all over the world. Country roads lined with cypresses, soft rolling fields of many shades and colours, small towns perched upon gentle hills, abbeys and monasteries discovered from their location of silence. We'll breathe the history that lived along the Francigena road passing through a landscape made for man to admire. Anciently created by the Romans the Francigena was a major route used by thousands of pilgrims on their way to Rome. Our lunches and dinners will be spent in local medieval towns where the tradition of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance marries each other on plates of wild boar, truffle linguine and hearty pasta sauces. We'll visit Montalcino where you'll enjoy the most stunning panoramas over the Val d'Orcia and you could be inebriated by the flavour of the famous Brunello wine. We'll have lunch in the "ideal city" of Pienza conceptualized by Pope Pious II as the perfect Renaissance city. San Quirico and Montepulciano will be on our list and so will the dream like little hamlet of Bagno Vignoni.

### Saturday 13th September - DEPARTURE DAY

After breakfast you'll start your journey back home. We have scheduled some time to spend together back at the hotel and chat over the images that you have taken or wish to take. Your instructor will be with you all the time ready to help and to you suggestions. You will cover topics of landscape, architectural, and possibly portrait photography, and an old time favourite 'paining with light' demonstration. Both our hotels are conveniently located to give their guests plenty of photographic opportunities. In Florence we'll be right in the middle of the San Lorenzo Market surrounded by statues and ancient monuments. In the Val d'Orcia our country hotel is surrounded by wild nature and hills.

## Accommodation

The Palazzo Benci has for centuries been the home of the Benci family; an important dynasty of priors and gonfaloniers. Brought back to life by an attentive restoration the Palazzo Benci is now a beautiful hotel right in the centre of Florence.



Hotel Palazzo Benci ([http://www.palazzobenci.com/relax\\_room.htm](http://www.palazzobenci.com/relax_room.htm))

An elegant and refined four star hotel, the result of rebuilding an ancient 1600 post house, it is situated in the lovely countryside not far from Siena, inside the reserve of the Val d'Orcia, a few minutes away from Montalcino, the home of Brunello wine, from Pienza, the ideal town of Pope Pius II and opposite the village of Bagno Vignoni with its spa waters.

Hotel Osteria dell' Orcia ([http://www.hotelorcia.it/luoghi\\_toscana-e.htm](http://www.hotelorcia.it/luoghi_toscana-e.htm))

## Travel

We ask our participants to make their own way to the Palazzo Benci Hotel in Florence. Rome and Pisa airports are connected by train and coaches to the centre of Florence. Florence airport is a short taxi ride from the centre. You can then decide which airline suits you best and which airport is easier to reach. Please contact us for advice on how to reach the centre of Florence and your hotel.

You will be taken back to Florence on September 13th where you'll be able to make your travel arrangement to reach your airport. Please contact us if you need to be dropped off at a more convenient location - we'll try our best.

## Companions

Photography is a passion that touches millions of people, but that doesn't always mean that it is shared throughout your family! A great many of our participants choose to travel with their husbands, wives or partners, and we make every effort to make them just as welcome as everybody else. Should you wish to attend with your partner we would welcome them to come along. Please note that non-participating partners would need to have their own transportation as space in our minibus is limited. For help in finding things to do in the area, the staff at the Villa will be more than happy to assist with this when you arrive.

## The Photography

### Photography

To Follow

### Teaching

To Follow

## Is this for me?

Our Tours are the perfect combination between travel and learning. We welcome people of all skill levels on our tours, and we design our itineraries in such a way that you can do as much or as little as you feel like. We get people of all ages on our tours, all united by a common passion in both photography and travel. We not only take you to the very best photo locations, but our tours are led by carefully chosen instructors that will inspire and assist you with taking great shots and improving your skills. You will still have the opportunity to learn plenty on our tours, and you'll find most of the learning is done out in the field. We combine great photography with unique travel experiences and local encounters that will convince you that this is the only way to travel!

## Inspiration

### Introduction



Below you will find a collection of photographers, writers and films chosen to awaken your senses. They may inspire you about the location or they may just intrigue you. Either way please use this as an insight into the experiences and impressions of others. International travel is so easy these days. The pace at which one travels and 'sees' the world gets faster and faster. If you feel like it, take a moment to slow the process down.

## Photographers

To Follow

## Books

Photography Books

"Tuscany: Images from the Alinary archives" by Giovanni Naldi (2005)

'Inner Game of Outdoor Photography' by Galen Rowell 2001

'Creative Exposure Control' by Les Meehan

General Literature

"Tuscany in mind" by Alice Leccese Powers (2005)

"War in the Val d'Orcia" by Iris Origo (1995)

"A thousand days in Tuscany" by Marlena De Blasi (2004)

"The Giuliana Legacy" by Alexis Masters

"Under the Tuscan sun" by Frances Mayes (2003)

## Movies

"The English Patient" directed by Anthony Minghella with Ralph Fiennes, Juliette Binoche, Willem Dafoe, Kristin Scott Thomas (1998)

"Under the Tuscan Sun" directed by Audrey Wells with Diane Lane, Roul Bova (2004)

"Inside the Tuscan hills" (documentary) by Dakkan Abbe (2006)

"Nostalghia" directed by Andrei Tarkovsky (1983)

"Tea with Mussolini" directed by Franco Zeffirelli with Cher, Judi Dench, Maggie Smith (1999)

## Forums

We have our own online forum that over the years has proven to be a very popular and useful way of not just keeping in touch after a workshop, but also before. It can be a fascinating source of information for those considering their first workshop with VSP. You will need to register to join the forum, and we recommend the following two sections

Ask a past VSP Workshops participant (<http://www.vspworkshops.com/cgi-bin/yabb2/YaBB.pl?board=feedback/>)

Discussion board for all participants booked on The Perfect Landscape Workshop (<http://www.vspworkshops.com/cgi-bin/yabb2/YaBB.pl?num=1191519618>)

## Testimonials



VSP Workshops

"What a great week. I have learnt so much about my camera, my photos, my eyes. Thank you for your energy, enthusiasm, careful planning and sense of humour"  
Kirsten, USA, 2006

"I have attended Workshops with Maine, Santa Fe and TPW and founded the organisation by VSP to be the best"  
David, UK, 2007

"I'm a better photographer and I feel I have more courage and greater awareness and sensitivity to what makes a successful photograph. The course has given me even more enthusiasm for photography"  
Ross, USA, 2005

"Very busy schedule, which I enjoyed. VSP take photo critiques very seriously and helps people of all levels and skills. Overall very much enjoyed the Workshop - best so far!"  
Frank, Netherlands, 2007

"If you like to travel and you have the passion for photography, this is the best combination to make your trip a perfect trip! Travel, shoot and enjoy the moment!"  
Beatrice, Italy, 2007

"VSP always exceeds my expectations. As a new photographer VSP encourages, challenges and inspires me to take my images to the next level"  
Rachel, USA, 2007

"You won't find a more friendly and delightful photo experience on the planet"  
Steve, USA, 2007

"Thank you very much for another fantastic workshop. It is so good to be able to spend time thinking about what I love - photography and not having to worry about anything else because you have thought of everything before. I learned a lot, I had a rest, I had a fantastic time with very nice people, I laughed a lot and wasn't thinking about my work - this is priceless! I will check on your web on a regular basis as always and we will definitely meet again - Grazie"  
Bob, USA, 2006