



The Perfect Landscape

Country

Italy

Region

Tuscany

Instructor

Jonathan Maher

Dates

04 May > 11 May 08

Price

£1750.00

Overview

There is perhaps, no place more synonymous with landscapes and light, than Tuscany . Our days will be spent immersed within spectacular photographic opportunities - smooth hills of varied texture, lanes sculptured by cypresses, fields of endless colour dotted with gems of architecture that overlook a scenery that seems as though it were created for the photographer. Isolated church towers will lead us through undulating landscapes into ancient towns where times has stood still. Whilst the main emphasis of the workshop will be upon landscape photography, there will also be many other opportunities to photograph Tuscan life.

Itinerary

What is Included

- Six full days tuition
- Seven nights of accommodation (own room with en suite)
- Breakfast is included on all mornings whilst in your hotel
- Transport around Tuscany during the course
- Transfer to and from Pisa airport to the hotel
- 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
- Film & other photographic materials such as memory cards film or processing
- Lunch & dinner unless specified otherwise

Calendar

Sunday 4 May 2008 - ARRIVAL DAY

After meeting your VSP contact at Pisa's international airport, a private bus service will transport you all the way to your hotel, and home for the coming week in Tuscany

After settling into your rooms and freshening up, we'll be meeting for welcome drinks and dinner together in your hotel's own traditional 'osteria' (traditional restaurant)

Monday 5 May 2008 - WORKSHOP DAY 1



After breakfast there will be an introductory talk by your instructors, Len and Diane. The talk will aim to introduce you to some of the photographic concepts you will be using each day, and is also our chance to start gaining a clear picture of each of your individual goals for the coming week

On our way to lunch, we'll take the scenic route, which will take us along some very picturesque landscapes that are beautiful to shoot even in the brighter sun. In May, the landscapes can be greener, producing a more vivid patchwork of interlocking shapes and colours. This is also a good opportunity to acquaint yourself with the environment, any new equipment you have, and also a chance for your instructors to speak with you within the context of setting up for a shoot

For lunch, we'll be visiting the stunning hilltop town of Pienza. Perched up on the hills overlooking the hills of the Val D'Orcia, it is a medieval town steeped in history. It's also the location of some of Tuscany's finest wines and cheeses, and a great place to have lunch! There will be time for you to explore the small town and its many pretty streets. After lunch we'll return back to the hotel where there will be a talk from the instructors about this evening's shoot. Your instructors will discuss various topics ranging from how to setup for a later afternoon landscape shoot, to issues of composition and visualising your end image.

In the later afternoon we'll drive up to our shoot location, where we'll have several hours to photograph one of Tuscany's most iconic landscape locations. As the sun falls, the surrounding hills and sky will transform through a range of colours, offering new photographic opportunities throughout the evening

After the shoot, we'll drive to the nearby town of San Quirico for dinner together followed by returning to the hotel for a well-deserved night's rest

Tuesday 6 May 2008 - WORKSHOP DAY 2

This morning (for those keen enough!), there will be a sunrise landscape shoot at one of our nearby favourite locations. Whilst you're taking wonderful photographs of the surrounding hills, we'll have hot coffee and cakes with us to keep you going through the morning - well at least until you get back to the hotel!

Back at the hotel there will be a proper breakfast served, followed by some time to relax. After an early morning shoot, we find it's always best to have a few hours to either steal back a few more hours sleep, or download your images from the morning's shoot

Today we'll take lunch at the hotel, allowing our instructors to spend some time personally with each of you, looking at your past work, or perhaps discussing your goals in photography should you wish

In the afternoon we'll do the first image review session. Together we'll have the chance to see each others' images, discuss how we got on, and ensure that you're happy with what you are doing and how you are progressing

This afternoon we'll head out for a landscape shoot. As always, we'll ensure that you are there when the light is at its best.

Dinner this evening will be in a restaurant near Montepulciano

Wednesday 7 May 2008 - WORKSHOP DAY 3

For the super-keen dedicated of the group, there will be an optional sunrise shoot this morning. Our hotel is wonderfully located just below the thermal springs of 'Bagno Vignoni', dating back to Roman times. We'll walk up through the fields behind the hotel, up to the springs, where we'll enjoy some great views of the Val D'Orcia. In May, the thermal springs produce a beautiful scene as the warm water mixes with the chilly morning air, giving off gentle clouds of steam. A beautiful sight!

For lunch we'll be visiting the town of Montepulciano - famous for its fabulous wines. Montepulciano is, like many Tuscany towns, perched upon the top of a hill - we'll drop you off at the very top, so you can enjoy a more leisurely walk through the town.

Back to hotel for relax

This afternoon we'll be visiting the beautiful abbey of Sant Antimo. Sit at the bottom of a gentle valley, it is surrounded by vineyards, and well kept gardens. We'll photograph the abbey as the sun sets as well as inside, as the last rays of light beam through the main doors, and we'll be there in time to listen to the resident monks performing the daily Gregorian chant.

We'll have dinner in Montalcino at one of our favourite traditional restaurants there

Thursday 8 May 2008 - WORKSHOP DAY 4

Today there will be a pleasant change in rhythm as we visit the splendid medieval town of Siena. This will be a chance to take some great shots of life in a Tuscan town, as well as a good time to get those presents and souvenirs you were thinking of buying. We'll have lunch in Siena, and head back to the hotel for the afternoon

Later in the afternoon we'll conduct another image review session, discussing our various images and experiences of



the last few days

Dinner at Bagno Vignoni in a lovely restaurant located right by the Roman thermal baths

Friday 9 May 2008 - WORKSHOP DAY 5

This morning (for those who wish), we'll be doing another early morning landscape shoot. As usual, there will be a small picnic breakfast on location, followed by a proper breakfast waiting for us when we get back to the hotel

As we normally do, following our early morning shoots, there will be time to relax back at the hotel

For lunch we'll head up to the nearby village of Montichiello. More a hamlet Montichiello commands some of the most stunning views over the surrounding hills.

After lunch we'll head back to the hotel, where there will be a talk by the instructors before this evening's shoot

This evening we'll visit a nearby location for a landscape shoot

Dinner at a nearby restaurant

Saturday 10 May 2008 - WORKSHOP DAY 6

This morning we'll do the final image review session - whilst not the end of your shooting for the trip, its when we do a final look at everybody's work, and conclude some of the concepts that we will have been looking at with you

For lunch we visit our favourite pizzeria in Tuscany!

This afternoon we'll head out to shoot some beautiful landscape spots nearby to where we'll be having the farewell dinner. The farewell dinner is located in our favourite place in Tuscany, which was also the filming location for some of the English Patient film

Sunday 11 May 2008 - DEPARTURE DAY

On the day of your departure we will transfer all participants to Pisa at a fixed time so that you can move onto your homeward journeys. Usual arrival at Pisa airport 11am

Accommodation

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.hotelorcias.it/luoghi_toscana-e.htm)

Travel

For this workshop you will be collected and returned from Italy's Pisa International Airport. Pickup from Pisa airport is at 4pm on Sunday 4th May 2008. You will be returned to Pisa airport by 11-12am on Sunday 11th May.

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



The Tuscany Workshop is predominantly about landscape photography. It is fair to say that about 90% of the greatest landscape locations in Tuscany are all situated in a 20 mile radius. The area we visit is unique for its soft rolling hills and typically Tuscany scenes or winding roads, peppered with cypress trees. Through the week we also visit a number of towns and villages, offering the chance to see and photograph some of Italy's most beautiful and historic locales. You will have the opportunity to photograph people and villages, impressive monuments and architecture alongside a fantastic selection of landscape locations.

Our landscape shoots are nearly all done in the morning or late afternoon light. We stagger this so that we never do both an early morning and late afternoon on the same day. Instead you'll do an early morning one day, and then an early evening the next. Our landscape shoots are designed to take you to great locations at the best time. For the mornings this means before 6am. We never take you to a place after the best light - we'd rather get you there in good time to get great shots - then allow a few hours back at the Villa afterwards to relax. Light is absolutely critical for landscape shots, and our itinerary is based around the best light.

Teaching

Whenever we arrive at a shoot location, the instructor usually gives a briefing about important considerations, what the light is like, equipment, and anything else that will be relevant to cover prior to picking up your camera. At that point you find a spot you like, setup, and the instructor will pass around all of you, stopping to discuss your approach and answer any questions.

There will also be some in-the-field demonstrations and talks, in conjunction with talks and slide-shows back at the Villa. The most important part of the learning process is undoubtedly the image review session. We aim to do these in nearly all of the days, and this is a time we you get to hear feedback on your work and that of the others. The images are displayed using a digital projector and it is an incredibly useful exercise.

Is this for me?

Our Tuscany offering is what we call a 'Workshop'. This means that it is open to all skill levels. Our Workshops involve critique sessions on most days, and our emphasis is on the photography first and foremost. We try to strike a balance between showing our participants important places and landmarks, whilst avoiding going down the route of a 'tour' company. Travel is very often an integral part of workshops, and when we design our itineraries, we keep this in mind. We design our days to be full so that for those with the energy - they will never be bored - and those who wish to adopt a slower pace - they can do so by opting out of certain activities.

Our passion is photography, and we welcome all of you that share this love. One of the great benefits of learning in a group, is the knowledge you also gain from those around you. New ideas, shared critiques and a good sense of camaraderie are ingredients we actively try to encourage in all of our trips.

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

Joel Sartore

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

"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