



Hill Towns of Umbria

Italy: Self-Guided Cycling

Cycling in Umbria is a wonderful opportunity to appreciate both its natural beauty and its artistic treasures, and this tour includes visits to some of the major city centers and gorgeous surroundings of this special region. Umbria is a mystic land and a great serenity can be felt in the air, in the soft colors of the landscape: the **grey stone houses**, the silvery-green olive trees, the soft powdery color of the earth, the patchworks of wild flowers. Biking through Umbria's sensual rolling terrain with all its sweet power and magic is a gift to yourself you'll treasure for a lifetime! On this tour you'll enjoy visits to the impressive towns of **Cortona** (in Tuscany), **Perugia**, **Assisi**, and **Spello** with their typical medieval appearance, and exquisite hilltop villages scattered over Umbria's green hills. You'll discover century-old farms and churches (notably the unforgettable **Basilica of San Francesco** in Assisi) and sweeping views over the unspoiled Umbrian landscape. The climate is mild, the food is delicious, and the art is incredible.

Included

- 7 nights of double occupancy lodging in mostly 3-star, air-conditioned hotels with private facilities each night
- Daily breakfast and 2 dinners
- **21 or 24-speed hybrid bicycle**
- Daily route directions for individual departures in the morning
- Luggage transfers
- All taxes and gratuities for the hotel and restaurant portions of the tour

Daily Itinerary

Day 1: Cortona

You will arrive in the Terontola train station and transfer to your hotel in Cortona, still part of Tuscany and the setting for Frances Mayes' best-seller "Under the Tuscan Sun." **Cortona** is a small but fascinating city in the province of Arezzo, situated on a commanding hill overlooking **Lake Trasimeno**. Its massive walls, still in great part preserved, are said to be 3000 years old. It was one of the twelve cities of Etruria and in its vicinity many ruins and Etruscan tombs may be seen. It's a wonderful city for a delightful afternoon's sightseeing.

Day 2: Cortona – La Corte del Poggio – 31 miles (50 km)

You will enter Umbria and pedal by Lake Trasimeno, whose shores shelter migratory birds that nest in the bamboo that surrounds the lake. All around you'll notice lovely villages surrounded by olive groves. There will be time to take a boat to Isola Maggiore where old ladies still weave traditional lace, fisherman mend their nets, and where you can savor some delicious fresh fish at Sauro's Fish Restaurant. You can also climb to the highest point on the island, crowned by the 14th century Church of San Michele. Later you'll continue biking to our destination, a peaceful agriturismo in the lush countryside. It will be possible to take a cooking class tonight.

Day 3: La Corte del Poggio to Perugia – 20 miles (32 km)

Today you'll bike through lovely, quiet countryside up to Perugia. **Perugia** is the capital city of Umbria and the center of major cultural institutions. It was an Etruscan stronghold before it became a Roman colony and was an important walled city in the middle ages, built high on the hilltop to repel invaders. The streets are precariously narrow. The splendid 14th century **Palazzo** dei Priori sits at its highest point and houses the National Gallery of Umbria with its many artistic treasures. The nearby Corso Vannucci is ideal for more strolling and people watching. Don't forget to try Perugia's world renowned chocolates! Your comfortable hotel is conveniently located in Perugia's historic center.

Day 4: Perugia to Assisi – 26 miles (42 km)

As you cycle through the heart of Umbria you'll pass by Deruta. **Deruta** is famous for beautiful ceramics that have been produced here for centuries. If you decide to visit you'll have an impressive choice of this gorgeous craft in Deruta's shops and workshops. You might like stop in **Torgiano**, home of Umbria's finest wines produced by Giorgi Lungarotti. Here, you can visit their wine museum which features medieval machinery. Then it's easy biking to **Assisi**. Make time in the afternoon to see this city's artistic highlights. You can visit the magnificent Basilica of San Francesco, painstakingly restored after the recent earthquake. The basilica complex is composed of two churches built one above the other, the lower one dating from 1228 – 1230 and the upper one from 1230 – 1253. Entering the lower part of **Piazza San Francesco**, you'll get an unforgettable view of the facade with its simple, harmonious lines. Inside the lower church are beautiful frescoes by famous artists such as Lorenzetti and Giotto, and the wonderful Chapel of St. Martin is completely frescoed by Martini with scenes of the life of St. Martin. It's one of the most beautiful works of the painter and a masterpiece of Gothic art. You can visit the Crypt and the Chapel of the Relics where St. Francis' belongings are kept. It's the upper church, however, where you'll find Giotto's frescoes illustrating the life of St. Francis and one of the most important cycles of paintings in the history of Italian art. In the Piazza del Commune you'll see a 14th century pulpit and the Roman Temple of Minerva, with a well-preserved original exterior.

Day 5: Assisi – Spello - Bevagna – Assisi – 31 miles (50 km)

Today you'll cycle through beautiful olive groves on top of a ridge to **Spello**, a small, perfectly preserved town still encircled by Roman walls. It's possible to make a stop in **Bevagna** on your way back to Assisi. Don't forget to sample the famous Sagrantino wine. You could also stay in Assisi today and have more time to explore this fabulous "pink" city.

Day 6: Assisi – Bevagna – Todi – 25 miles (40 km)

You'll start with an easy ride from Assisi to Bevagna, known for its medieval market during in June. You can enjoy a cappuccino on the unspoiled medieval market square before cycling into the heart of wine country to **Montefalco**, nicknamed "the balcony of Umbria" because of its spectacular views. Montefalco is also famous for its outstanding wine. Please take time here to admire the dazzling 15th century Renaissance frescoes painted by Benozzo Gozzoli in the huge **church of San Francesco**. You will then cut across the Monte Martani mountains before descending towards the hilltop town of Todi, built by the Etruscans. You can visit the impressive Piazza del Popolo, one of the most striking squares in Italy, designed in the Middle Ages so that the square could be defended by closing the narrow exits at each corner. Be sure to see the Palazzo as well, one of the oldest surviving public buildings in Italy. You'll spend the night in a historical palace.

Day 7: Todi – transfer to Orvieto – 27 miles (44 km)

Now that you've grown familiar with Umbrian hills, you will get a bit more of them. Your last day will be spent riding along the twisting road above the Corbara lake to **Orvieto**. This Etruscan town dominates the valleys with its brown-red cliffs of soft Tufo stone which, since Etruscan times, have been carved to make tombs and cellars. You should try to make time to visit the Duomo, considered the finest cathedral of its period in Italy with some amazing frescoes by Signorelli. You can take a final stroll up and down Orvieto's narrow streets where you'll find many picturesque stores for some last minute shopping.

Day 8: Tour Ends

Your tour ends today with departure after breakfast.

Starting Point

You will be met by a representative in the train station in Cortona. There's a direct train from Rome or Florence to the Terontola Train Station near Cortona. **Please let us know the arrival time of your train at least one week before your trip!** For train schedules visit the website of the Italian Railways, www.trenitalia.com or www.raileurope.com.

Level of Difficulty

The daily cycling is on hilly terrain and the level of difficulty is "moderate." Good cycling experience is recommended to deal with up and down hills and periodically difficult Italian traffic.

Bicycles

21 or 24-speed hybrid bikes are included in the price of the tour. Bicycles come equipped with grip shifters, handlebar bag, bell, cage, and water bottle, with an optional bike computer. It's also possible to replace our pedals with your own "clip on" pedals. Helmets are not included, so **please bring your own helmet!**

WiFi

WiFi is available on a limited basis in hotels. Don't expect to have a perfect internet connection for your entire stay. Usually during the busiest hours when many people are online the speed gets slower, and you may have trouble connecting.

Not included

- Airfare
- Alcoholic and bar beverages
- Lunches and five dinners
- Transportation other than scheduled transfers