

TUSCAN GARDENS

Three great centres of Italian gardens – Lucca, Florence and Siena, with outstanding Tuscan gardens representing their development from the early Renaissance through to modern times. (Walking: Easy... but with plenty of time spent on your feet for garden visits)

Day 1 From Pisa airport we travel by road (30 mins) to the delightful, walled city of Lucca.

Day 2 This morning we visit two historic properties: Villa Reale di Marlia, an historic garden that once belonged to Elisa Bonaparte; and Villa Torrigiani, an elaborate villa set in a simple, formal garden. After lunch, free time to explore Lucca.

Day 3 We drive (1.5 hours) to Florence and visit (subject to opening) one of the historic Medici properties to the north of the city, Villa di Castello or Villa Petraia. After lunch we visit the delightful garden of Villa Gamberaia, much appreciated by Edith Wharton, before continuing to Pieve a Castello (1 hour, 15 mins).

Day 4 We drive (35 mins) to visit Villa Geggiano, just outside Siena, with its elegant gardens, theatre and wonderful views over the city. Optional free afternoon in Siena, or return to Pieve.

Day 5 We follow scenic roads south to the villages of San Quirico (1.5 hours) and Pienza (25 mins), pausing in each to visit small, historic gardens. After lunch we continue (30 mins) to the superbly designed gardens of La Foce, creation and former home of writer Iris Origo. Return to Pieve (1 hour, 45 mins), for a festival evening with concert.

Day 6 We drive (25 minutes) to Villa Vicobello, and visit the fine Renaissance garden built by Baldassare Peruzzi for the Chigi family in the 16th century. Optional afternoon walk (1 hour).

Day 7 We drive (30 mins) into the wooded hills behind Pieve to visit the 'Peruzzi' gardens of the Castello di Celsa. From here, we enjoy a scenic drive through the Montagnola, with an optional walk back to Pieve (1.5 hours). Afternoon free to enjoy Pieve a Castello, before a gala dinner.

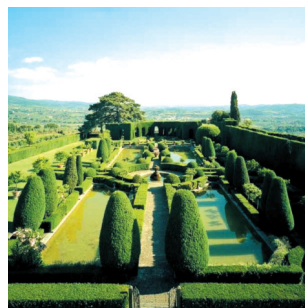
Day 8 Transfer to Pisa airport by road (1.5 hours).



Delightful Lucca, a perfectly preserved jewel of medieval architecture, renowned for its historic centre encircled by Renaissance walls, cobblestone streets, wonderful churches and piazzas.



The lemon garden at Villa Reale di Marlia has over 200 vases of citrus fruit, and a fish pond with two lounging statues representing the Arno and Serchio Rivers.



Edith Wharton described Villa Gamberaia – with wide views over Florence – as 'probably the most perfect example of the art of producing a great effect on a small scale'.



Excursions? If you feel like opting out, Pieve a Castello is the perfect place to relax, with a library and music room; and terraces, a loggia and gardens to sit and enjoy the views.



The superbly structured gardens of Villa La Foce, situated on the Via Francigena, with sweeping views over southern Tuscany towards Monte Amiata.



Villa Vicobello, with its fine Renaissance garden built by Baldassare Peruzzi for the Chigi family in the 16th century, and wonderful views towards Siena.