

Pieve a Castello, situated in idyllic countryside between Florence and Siena, is a former Augustinian canonry that, from 700-1400AD, provided hospitality to travellers on the Via Francigena, the 'main road to Rome'.



Idyllic countryside of meadows, olive groves, vineyards and south towards Siena; extensively forested hills, the Montagnola, where the tracks and paths display clear evidence of their origins as ancient roads.



Monteriggioni, with its 84 inhabitants, high walls and 14 watchtowers – described in the 'Divine Comedy' by Dante, who arrived on a foggy morning in 1300, as appearing like 'giants in the mist'.



Medieval Siena, still wonderfully preserved, was one of the wealthiest cities in Europe, and its heritage includes works by outstanding artists of the period, now icons of Western Art...



We walk to explore the 'green lungs' of Florence – the renowned Boboli, and lesser-known Bardini Gardens, offering wonderful views across the city.



For those who want to relax and enjoy being at Pieve a Castello there is a library, music system, an excellent pool and over 200 miles of Footloose-style walking.



# PIEVE: AS YOU LIKE IT - ITINERARY 1

Stay at one of the oldest, most perfectly preserved, early medieval buildings in Europe, surrounded by idyllic countryside, with the leisure to explore the area's incomparably rich cultural Heritage. (Walking: Easy to moderate)

**Day 1** Transfer from Pisa or Florence airport (1.5/1 hour) to Pieve a Castello. After time to relax, there will be a tour of the unique complex of early 8th century buildings. Evening presentation: *Tuscan Heritage*.

**Day 2** We walk through idyllic countryside to discover paths and tracks – once routes of the ancient 'main road to Rome'. We return for lunch, and later enjoy a tour of the organic vegetable gardens, followed by a cooking demonstration. Evening presentation: *Dante Alighieri, Guelfs and Ghibellines*.

**Day 3** We walk through forests of the Montagnola – following early medieval paths, to the fortified, hill-top village of Monteriggioni, with its 14 watch towers, described in Dante's 'Divine Comedy'. Evening presentation: *Good & Bad Government by Ambrogio Lorenzetti*.

**Day 4** We spend the morning in Siena, visiting the Palazzo Pubblico and enjoying iconic, early Renaissance works of art including the Lorenzetti's renowned frescoes. We return for lunch and time to relax, before a leisurely early evening stroll ('la passeggiata') leads to a local restaurant in the ancient village of Casole d'Elsa (whose twinkling lights are visible at night from Pieve a Castello).

**Day 5** We drive (45 mins) to hills overlooking Florence, and walk to visit the magnificent church of San Miniato al Monte, before exploring other nearby 'gems'. Evening concert in the church before dinner.

**Day 6** We drive (1 hour 10 mins) to Montalcino, south of Siena, centre of the famous Brunello wine-producing area, then walk through vineyards to the exquisite Abbey church of Sant' Antimo, built of alabaster and onyx. Evening presentation and wine tasting: *Chianti!*

**Day 7** 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. After returning for lunch there is the option of a walk following the ancient Via Francigena to a frescoed church and hermitage. Evening: gala dinner.

**Day 8** Morning transfer to Pisa or Florence airport.