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# Discover Southeastern Tuscany

### **Southeastern Tuscany...**

- ◇ Stunning Landscapes
- ◇ Unspoiled Villages
- ◇ Medieval Castles
- ◇ Natural Hot Springs
- ◇ Ancient Spa Towns
- ◇ Easy Access to Florence, Siena & Rome
- ◇ Etruscan Ruins
- ◇ "King of Wines"
- ◇ Rich Artistic Heritage

While the charms of Tuscany's Chianti area have deservedly gained great popularity among visitors to the region, Tuscany's southeastern provinces offer a natural beauty and a rich cultural heritage that remain curiously under-appreciated.

Vineyards and olive groves criss-cross woods of oak, chestnut and pine to form the verdant patchwork of the southeastern Tuscan landscape. The Val D'Orcia (Orcia River Valley), together with Tuscany's highest mountain, Monte Amiata, and the smaller Monte Cetona, provide some of the most wonderful natural scenery in all of Tuscany. Strikingly varied landscapes are also found just over the line in the region of Umbria, home to the huge Lake of Trasimeno and the idyllic Monti Sibillini.

An abundance of natural hot springs scattered throughout the area have given rise to spa towns where local residents and visitors have long sought the health benefits of "taking

the waters". Among the southeastern Tuscan hills one also discovers a wealth of unspoiled hill towns and villages, endowed with vestiges of the region's fascinating cultural history, from Etruscan times to the present.

While enjoying these many attractions, vacationers choosing to stay in southeastern Tuscany also benefit from extremely easy access to the larger Italian cities of Florence, Siena and Rome. Not only does the major A1 Highway cut straight through southeastern Tuscany on its way from Florence to Rome, but a major train line follows much the same course. Passengers boarding in the nearby town of Chiusi can find themselves in Rome in about an hour or Florence in an hour and a quarter. Below is a more detailed account of just a few of the area's many delights.

*The Doorways' staff is happy to discuss in detail any of a number of lovely large villas and farm residences in southeastern Tuscany. This is one of our favorite areas.*



## Arezzo

At the northernmost point of this featured area we find **Arezzo**, once a prominent member of the twelve-city Etruscan Federation. Home to one of Italy's largest antiques markets, Arezzo is also well known for the "Legend of the True Cross," the famous fresco cycle by Piero della Francesca, which adorns the walls of the church of San Francesco. While another of della Francesca's works can be seen in Arezzo's Duomo, enthusiasts of the celebrated painter may choose to follow his trail even further, through the neighboring towns of Monterchi and San Sepolcro, to see additional works. Arezzo also counts among its attractions a couple of fine museums and a curiously sloping medieval piazza, as well as monuments to two of its most prominent native sons—the medieval poet Petrarca and the Renaissance art historian Giorgio Vasari.

### **Local Highlights**

- ◇ Arezzo
- ◇ Cortona
- ◇ Montepulciano
- ◇ Pienza
- ◇ Val D'Orcia
- ◇ Cetona
- ◇ "Southern Sisters"

## Cortona

**Cortona** is a perfectly preserved medieval jewel, rising so steeply from the surrounding terrain that many of its walkways are actually staircases cut into stone. Ample recompense for the climb is paid in panoramic views over the Tuscan plain known as the Val di Chiana. Legend has it that Cortona is older than even Troy; in any case the town later joined Arezzo as



part of the Etruscan Confederation, and Etruscan remains are found in its Museo dell'Accademia Etrusca, as well as in a couple of tomb sites on the outskirts of town. Paintings by Cortona's most prominent artist, Luca Signorelli, are displayed in the town's exceptional Museo Diocesano, as are works by Fra Angelico and other masters.



**Vino Nobile**  
"King of Wines"

## Montepulciano

The lively town of **Montepulciano** is distinguished by its several fine examples of Renaissance architecture, and no less by its acclaimed red wine, the *Vino Nobile di Montepulciano*. After touring the town's architectural beauties, visitors won't regret taking time to wander some of the quieter back streets and medieval alleyways as well. Montepulciano's residents show a celebratory spirit each August with an

exhibition of local handicrafts (the *Mostra Interregionale dell'Artigianato*) and a festival of the *Cantiere Internazionale d'Arte*, featuring plays, music and dance performances and art exhibits. Best of all, according to tradition, on the last Sunday of August, representatives from each of the town's eight districts compete in the *Bravio delle Botti*, a race uphill pushing an 80-kilo barrel!

## Pienza and the Val D'Orcia

**Pienza** is the largest of a host of delightful villages scattered throughout the lovely **Val D'Orcia**. ...Or, perhaps we should call it a *town*. Once known as Corsignano, the village was "transformed" during the 15<sup>th</sup> century by the architects of its native son, Pope Pius II, who then made use of a papal bull to rename it Pienza. Highlights of this



unique, "planned" Renaissance town are its huge Piazza Pio II and an impressive classically inspired *Duomo*. A leisurely drive through the Val D'Orcia is an invitation to many wonderful discoveries—from tiny villages centered around once-splendid medieval castles to hot springs formerly frequented by the ancient Romans.

**Local Highlights, continued...**

## ...and more of the Val D'Orcia

At **Bagno Vignoni** one finds an enchanting piazza where warm, sulphurous waters from a nearby hot spring bubble up into a pool constructed long ago by the Medici family. Nearby, visitors may enjoy visiting the 12<sup>th</sup>-century Benedictine abbey of **Sant'Antimo**. Set gracefully at the foot of a great green hill, the abbey is notable for its Romanesque buildings and beautiful interiors. Of the numerous castles found in the area, **Rocca Di**



**Tentennano** stands out, towering impressively over the tiny medieval village of **Rocca d'Orcia**. Following the mountain road to **Monte Amiata's** summit, one gains a view not only of the Val D'Orcia but of two vast valleys on the mountain's other side, the Fiora and the Paglia. On a clear day the panorama encompasses the Tyrrhenian coast and the islands of Elba and Corsica, as well as the towns of Siena, Cortona and Orvieto and the lakes of Trasimeno and Bolsena.

## Cetona

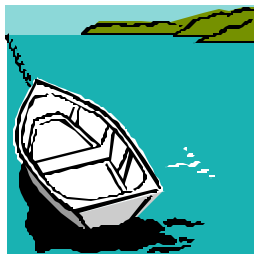
Near the east end of the Val D'Orcia sits the beautifully preserved medieval hill village of **Cetona** and the mountain bearing the same name. Cetona's streets are fun to explore, including a walkway along the walls of the village castle, the "Rocca." After thus soaking up the atmosphere, visitors will enjoy visiting two wonderful

local museums. The Museo Civico per la Preistoria documents the presence of humans on Monte Cetona from the Paleolithic to the Bronze Age, while the Belforte Archeological Park is the site of an important Bronze Age excavation on Monte Cetona itself. While on the mountain, take time to wander delightful walking paths and explore the cave.



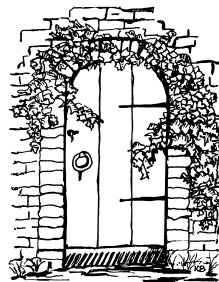
## "Southern Sisters" and Beyond...

At the very southeastern tip of Tuscany lies a trio of sister villages—**Sovana, Pitigliano** and **Sorano**—set into volcanic rock. While tiny Sovana reveals the only significant "sights" among the three—including the glorious Romanesque church of Santa Maria and a wonderful 8<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> century **Duomo**—all three villages are thick with atmosphere and surrounded with Etruscan tombs.



Travelers exploring southeastern Tuscany will no doubt find that neighboring **Umbria** too has much to recommend it. Just to scratch the surface...**Perugia, Assisi, Gubbio, Spello, Spoleto, Todi** and **Orvieto** are all fabulous towns to visit and the Lake of Trasimeno, just over the border from Tuscany, is a great spot for water sports. Visitors to the lake can also choose to take a boat ride to any of its three islands.

***We hope you will enjoy discovering  
Southeastern Tuscany!***



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