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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

The Sabine Hills: Enjoy Roman cuisine, culture, and history from the nearby countryside

One of the most overlooked parts of the Roman countryside, the Sabine Hills remain an undiscovered gem, rich in history and Roman archeology. Located northeast of Rome, it has been immortalized by painters and poets since ancient times. It was second home for St. Francis of Assisi. The mountains, waterfalls and lakes, rich farms, lush scenery, and good food make it an ideal destination for rest and recreation as well as artistic and historical discoveries. The ancient Roman routes are still in use and, as ever, all roads lead to Rome.

You can even sample Roman food and cooking by learning to do it yourself. Doorways, Ltd., is offering a week of cooking classes, cooking itinerary and wine tasting. After settling in at a local thoroughbred farm, you will be attended to with a meal upon arrival. Guests will explore the rustic countryside while experiencing wonderful food, in some cases unique to the Sabine Hills. Tours of vineyards and a cheese maker are included in the trip—an absolute must for the food lover. Stops will be made at local restaurants that offer traditional fare as well as regional specialties.

In the valleys are farms, vineyards, and olive groves. The olive oil produced here is arguably the best in Italy. Winding roads, with stands of chestnuts and oaks, lead to medieval hill towns. It's not at all unusual to see wild pigs and wild horses grazing by the side of the road, or local residents carrying out firewood on the backs of donkeys.

The Sabine Hills were known as the breadbasket of Rome and home of beautiful women. To the east are the Apennine Mountains and the Via Salaria, or Road of Salt, the oldest of the roads leading to Rome. To the west lie the rich Tiber Valley and the coastal roads. The Sabines survived barbarian invasions and Saracen devastations and rose again in the 12th century to become part of the Papal State. Later the region was annexed by powerful barons in Rome, and Napoleon took it for his empire.

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Today the Sabine Hills are a rich mosaic of religious and historical monuments from the Classical, Medieval, Renaissance and Baroque eras. Hilltop towns, built into the rocky spurs of the Apennine foothills, are a living testament of the tenacity of its people. Leave your car at the gates of the towns and walk up through the narrow cobblestone streets to the town squares, castles and churches, and breathtaking views, found at the tops of the hills on which they are built.

Visitors have several choices of lodging. Most towns have small, European-style hotels. Estate owners welcome guests at bed-and-breakfasts or in apartments at farms or old palazzos in the hill towns. Villa Vallerosa, for example, is a restored farm in Selci, with race horses and working vineyards and olive groves. In your apartment, you will find fresh olive oil from the estate, should you want to cook during your stay. Other seasonal variations might include homemade jam, coffee, and biscotti. Luciana Pancera and Luigi Giussepi prepare at least one dinner for their guests, using meats and vegetables raised on the farm, all complemented by their own wines and grappa. For those who like to prepare vegetables fresh from the farm in their own kitchens, each of the estate's five apartments has kitchen facilities.

The Sabine Hills region is dotted with lakes with facilities for swimming and boating. Hiking, bocce, and horse-back riding are popular year round. In winter there is downhill and cross-country skiing at Leonessa and Terminillo. Golf, tennis, and swimming are only a five minute drive, and Rome is only a 45 minute drive or train ride away.

Weekly stays are ideal here for families with children; they offer both the convenience of home and diversions for children who might tire quickly of museums. Families and large groups might also rent a villa for a week. Many have pools for swimming and full use of kitchen facilities. In the hill towns, such as Montasola (2000 feet) and Casperia (1300 feet), ancient palazzos have been converted into modern apartments and are available for weekly rentals.

Information is available in the United States from Doorways, Ltd., in Bryn Mawr, PA, 800-261-4400 or from the Italian Government Tourist Office, 630 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10111.

(PHOTOS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST)