

BACKROADS
THE WORLD'S #1 ACTIVE TRAVEL COMPANY

BIKING

TUSCANY

PREMIERE INNS



Tuscany is not a destination. It's a sublime experience. Cypress-lined roads overlooking the vineyards will stop you on your bike. And no view will compare to that view. Until you round the next bend and see another. It's a wonder anyone ever finishes the rides. And that's only what you'll see; imagine the wines, flavors and luxuries you'll discover.

17BTTIR2u 10/27/2016

GUESTIMONIALS

Beyond special...the indulgence of a consistent 5 star experience in locations only experienced in the movies.

-Fredric Levin - Aspen, CO

Click [HERE](#) to read more guest reviews

6 DAYS, 5 NIGHTS

Click [HERE](#) for departure dates and pricing details

ROUTE RATING LEVELS 2-4

[See below for details](#)

TO RESERVE YOUR TRIP

Sign up online [HERE](#) or call 800-GO-ACTIVE (462-2848) or 510-527-1555

Open daily 6 a.m.-6 p.m. Pacific time

BACKROADS
THE WORLD'S #1 ACTIVE TRAVEL COMPANY

Why Backroads?

“Backroads is the best of the best.”

—Sheryl Simons, SK, Canada

NEVER SUBCONTRACTED

We operate our own trips around the globe. That way we control the quality—and we're fully responsible for your great experience.

TWO SUPPORT VANS

We provide two support vans on all of our trips* so you can count on us to be there when you need us, regardless of the route you take.

THREE LEADERS

Our trips have three leaders*, for an average 6:1 guest-to-leader ratio. Guests consistently score our leaders 9.7 out of 10, telling us they make all the difference.

THOUGHTFUL TRIP DESIGN

We know how to create exceptional travel experiences, ensuring that you get the most from your trip as it unfolds.

MULTIPLE DAILY ROUTES

Being able to choose among several expertly designed routes each day gives you the freedom to enjoy the best of a region at your own pace.

WE CELEBRATE MIXED ABILITIES

To accommodate varied activity levels, you need three leaders, two vans, multiple route options, detailed directions, a rating system showing if shuttles are required, and plenty of well-matched riding/hiking companions.

*Over 95% of Backroads guests on scheduled trips travel with three Backroads trip leaders or support staff, and two or more vehicles. We even add a fourth leader for meet and move days on some of our most logistically complex trips with the most guests to ensure everyone enjoys the best possible support. On less than 5% of scheduled trips, the number of guests is small enough that we can maintain our trademark high service standards with just two leaders and one van.

Click [HERE](#) to learn more about the Backroads Quality Guide





Day 1

On the first day of the trip, meet your Backroads Trip Leaders (the folks in Backroads T-shirts) at 10 a.m. at the Santa Maria Novella train station in Florence, Italy. Please note that we meet at Florence's Santa Maria Novella train station, not the Campo Marte station. A Trip Leader will be waiting at the far end of Track 16 (*Binario 16*). To get there, find the pharmacy (*farmacia*), then walk approximately 1,000 feet to the end of Track 16.

Please arrive dressed in your biking clothes and bring your luggage and a daypack with your rain gear and anything else you may want for today's ride (your luggage will be transported to our first night's accommodations). If you choose to change into your gear following our shuttle, be aware that a proper changing area is often unavailable.

Shuttle to Montecchio 1½ Hours

Biking Options:

Cortona Base Route: 16 Miles* (600' elevation gain)
 La Corte dei Papi Route: 20 Miles (1,000')
 La Corte dei Papi with Cortona Climb Route: 27 Miles (1,700')

**with shuttle*

Benvenuti in Italia! After meeting, our journey begins with a shuttle to a charming *agriturismo* (country retreat and working farm). After a delicious picnic lunch, your Backroads Trip Leaders fit your bike and give a brief talk on biking techniques and safety. Then head out on a warm-up ride through the Val di Chiana, one of Tuscany's agricultural centers. This region is also known for Chianina, a highly valued breed of

white cattle whose ancestors have been traced to prehistoric times. This beef is the main ingredient of one of Tuscany's most famous dishes, *bistecca alla Fiorentina* (steak grilled rare over charcoal, lightly salted with olive oil drizzled over the top).

Later today, make your way to historic Cortona, a lovely setting to linger over an afternoon coffee before jumping back on your bike for the final stretch to the hotel. Or, if you've had enough riding for the day, the shuttle can give you a lift to La Corte dei Papi, our luxurious accommodations situated at the base of the tranquil Cortona foothills. This evening we gather for a welcome *aperitivo* (cocktail) before a memorable dinner at La Corte dei Papi's gourmet restaurant. *Lodging: Relais La Corte dei Papi*

Day 2

Biking Options:

Monte San Savino Route: 23 Miles* (1,200' elevation gain)
 Gargonza Route: 26 Miles* (2,200')
 Colonna del Grillo Route: 36 Miles* (2,400')
 San Felice Route: 46 Miles (3,400')

**with shuttle*

After breakfast your bike awaits for a ride into the Val di Chiana. Pedal through undulating fields of sunflowers and wheat en route to your midday destination, the small town of Monte San Savino, where you can enjoy lunch on your own at a café or bar in town.

After lunch, if you're craving a bit more biking, pedal on toward Siena through the wooded hills that mark the border of the Chianti Classico wine region. These roads offer quintessential Tuscan views across rolling hills dotted with cypress trees, ancient farmhouses and the occasional castle. Feel free to call it a day at Colonna del Grillo—a quick shuttle to our next hotel allows time to relish and relax this afternoon.

Otherwise, it's just a bit farther (and a few more climbs) to Borgo San Felice, our Relais & Châteaux retreat that pampers us with plush amenities, including a spa and wellness center specializing in wine therapy.

This evening, enjoy a warm welcome in San Felice's cantina for an exclusive wine tasting featuring the estate's excellent wines before heading to dinner at a nearby *osteria*. *Lodging: Borgo San Felice*



Day 3

Biking Options:

Crete Senesi Route: 25 Miles* (1,900' elevation gain)

Grillo Route: 30 Miles (2,100')*

Crete Senesi Loop: 39 Miles (3,100')

**with shuttle*

You'll be happy you indulged in a hearty breakfast as you depart San Felice and set out on some heart-pumping hills. Have your camera handy for today's incredibly varied route—from dense forest and vineyards to the clay-formed lunar landscape of the Crete Senesi and *le biancane*, the wide-open chalk-colored hills of southern Tuscany often depicted in 14th- and 15th-century Florentine and Sienese paintings. These unique geographic features are among the most picturesque scenery of the trip!

Pass by the quaint village of Asciano as you make your way to an *agriturismo* where we will taste piquant *pecorino*, Tuscany's prized sheep milk cheese. Rest your legs over a fantastic picnic lunch, then the choice is yours: relax or ride!

After lunch, pedal toward Rapolano Terme, winding past sunbaked pastures dotted with sheep and crumbling stone farmhouses. At the junction of Collona del Grillo, you may opt to call it a day with a shuttle up to the hotel or climb onward to Borgo San Felice.

Tonight, we have the opportunity to visit beautiful Siena, home of the thousand-year-old Palio horse race around the Piazza del Campo. Join the locals for an *aperitivo* (and people watching!) in the lively

piazza before settling in for dinner on your own at one of Siena's excellent restaurants. Alternatively, if you prefer to enjoy a quiet evening at the hotel, savor a gourmet dining experience at Poggio Rosso, Borgo San Felice's renowned restaurant. *Lodging: Borgo San Felice*

Day 4

Biking Options:

Castellina Route: 24 Miles* (2,100' elevation gain)

Chianti Route: 36 Miles (2,800')

Brolio Route: 40 Miles (3,900')

**with shuttle*

Today's ride is pure Chianti Classico! A full day of splendid—and challenging!—cycling and incredible scenery awaits. Get the fun started with a steady ascent from the hotel, then follow winding roads through the countryside before a nice downhill brings you back to the Chiantigiana road. If you've got energy to burn this morning, take on the Montelucco challenge, a well-known training climb for local cyclists.

En route to Radda in Chianti, feel free to stop at the highly regarded Ceramiche Rampini, a great place to buy ceramics hand-painted in the Renaissance tradition. From there, make your way to Radda on a gradual climb. In 1415, Radda became the capital of the L'Antica Lega del Chianti (the Chianti League) and is still known as a center for Chianti Classico wine production. Sip a morning coffee in Radda and wander the medieval streets.

Afterward, hop back on your bike and continue along a rolling ridgeline with commanding views of vineyards and olive groves to Castellina in Chianti. This fortified hamlet with a picturesque castle served as a Florentine army outpost until the fall of Siena in 1555. Its military past can be seen in its old ramparts, fortress and arcaded walkway, Via delle Volte. Stroll along Castellina's bustling main thoroughfare and stop in at a local café for lunch on your own. In need of a new biking jersey? Now's your chance to get one emblazoned with the Gallo Nero (Black Rooster), the ubiquitous logo for Chianti Classico wines.

If you've had enough biking for the day, shuttle to our next hotel and relish an afternoon of downtime. Otherwise, return to your bike to explore country roads with a downhill coast out of Castellina offering unsurpassed views of Siena and San Gimignano in the

distance.

A few challenging climbs await en route to Castello del Nero, our home for the next two nights, perched atop a hill offering spectacular views of the undulating Tuscan landscape. Ride through serene villages before arriving at the hotel, where there's time this afternoon to take a dip in the pool or indulge in a massage at the spa before dinner at your leisure at Castello del Nero's Michelin starred La Torre restaurant. *Lodging: Castello del Nero*



Day 5

Biking Options:

San Gimignano Route: 19 Miles* (1,700' elevation gain)

Val d'Elsa Route: 26 Miles* (2,200')

San Gimignano Loop: 42 Miles (4,100')

**with shuttle*

Leaving Castello del Nero, pedal the hills of the Colli Fiorentini as we head into the Pesa and Elsa river valleys. Today's ride is loaded with sweeping views and hilltops peppered with agricultural homesteads and ancient fortresses.

Dominating the horizon ahead, you can't mistake the tower-crowned town of San Gimignano! Known as *la città delle belle torri* (the town of beautiful towers), this World Heritage site is one of Tuscany's crown jewels. Established in the 10th century on the site of an Etruscan settlement, it is named for Saint Gimignano, the Holy Bishop of Modena who reputedly saved the town from barbarians. Construction of the town's distinctive towers began in the 11th century. The 13 towers that still stand are impressive enough, but the town once boasted 72! Stroll through the city's

picturesque squares and medieval fortifications, and check out the 13th-century cistern (which still works). Enjoy lunch on your own at one of San Gimignano's many restaurants and *osterie*. And don't miss having an award-winning gelato on the *piazza* at Gelateria Dondoli!

After lunch, there's time to explore San Gimignano before making our way back to the hotel—either hop in the van or opt to get some additional miles pedaling the hills. The rest of the afternoon is yours to while away at your leisure. Take a refreshing dip in the pool, indulge in a spa treatment or simply enjoy some R&R in your comfortable room.

This evening we reconvene for a special farewell toast before a festive dinner in the hotel's La Taverna restaurant. *Buon appetito! Lodging: Castello del Nero*

Day 6

San Pancrazio Loop 14 Miles (1,100' elevation gain)

Shuttle to Florence Train Station 2 Hours

Take to your bike one last time with an early-morning ride to nearby San Pancrazio, located on a scenic hilltop dividing the Pesa and Virginio river valleys. If time permits, stop for a cappuccino before heading back to Castello del Nero. Or, if a short walk or jog is more your speed, head out for an excursion on foot in the vineyards surrounding the hotel.

Looking forward to sleeping in instead? Then enjoy a quiet morning and leisurely breakfast at the hotel. We regroup late morning to say our goodbyes before boarding a shuttle to the Florence train station, where our trip ends. Please see "Arriving & Departing" for end-of-trip logistics.

KEEPING YOU UP TO DATE

We are always seeking opportunities to enhance this itinerary. We'll be certain to notify you of any important changes prior to departure; other changes may be communicated on trip by your leaders.

SHIFT GEARS!

At Backroads we understand that you have your own idea of the "perfect" trip—the right mix of being active, discovering new cultures and natural wonders, and having time to relax.

Our trips are designed to be flexible, giving you the freedom to experience the best of the region the way YOU want. Feel like you're ready to go, go, go? We can show you the way! Want some downtime or prefer to head out on your own? No problem!

Your Trip Leaders will make sure to tell you the best days to take time for yourself (if you want it) without feeling like you're missing out.

So feel free to shift gears and make it your day!

Trip Accommodations

PREMIERE INNS



1 Night

Relais La Corte dei Papi

Feel welcomed like family by owner David Papi at this elegant and superbly appointed 18th-century country home, rated one of the top hotels in Italy and a Backroads-exclusive property. (pool) | Cortona | www.lacortedeipapi.com | +39-0575-614109

2 Nights (above)

Borgo San Felice

Described by the *Hideaway Report* as an "enchanted resort enclave set within a restored medieval hamlet fringed by olive groves and vineyards in the Chianti Classico region." A Relais & Châteaux member. (pool, spa) | San Felice | www.borgosanfelice.com | +39-0577-3964

2 Nights

Castello del Nero

A castle with a Michelin-starred restaurant steeped in Tuscan charm and situated on a hilltop overlooking rolling vineyards and olive orchards in the Colli Fiorentini. (pool, spa) | Tavarnelle Val di Pesa | www.castellodelnero.com | +39-0558-06470

Arriving & Departing

After reviewing the following information, please inform us of your arrival and departure plans on your *Personal Information Form*.

Depending on train schedules, you may need to spend the night before your trip in our meeting town or wait at the train station between your arrival and the start of your Backroads trip.

All prices are in US dollars and subject to change.

The standard unit of currency in Italy is the euro (EUR). At the time of printing, 0.90 EUR = 1 USD. For the most up-to-date exchange rate, visit www.xe.com (Universal Currency Converter).

MEETING TIME & LOCATION

On the first day of the trip, meet your Backroads Trip Leaders (the folks in Backroads T-shirts) at 10 a.m. at the Santa Maria Novella train station in Florence, Italy. Please note that we meet at Florence's Santa Maria Novella train station, not the Campo Marte station. A Trip Leader will be waiting at the far end of Track 16 (*Binario 16*). To get there, find the pharmacy (*farmacia*), then walk approximately 1,000 feet to the end of Track 16.

Please arrive dressed in your biking clothes and bring your luggage and a daypack with your rain gear and anything else you may want for today's ride (your luggage will be transported to our first night's accommodations). If you choose to change into your gear following our shuttle, be aware that a proper changing area is often unavailable.

CONCLUSION OF THE TRIP

On the last day of the trip, Backroads provides private transportation to Florence's Santa Maria Novella train station, arriving at around 1 p.m. From here you can take an afternoon train to Rome, Milan or other destinations. Please do not book a train departing before 2 p.m. If you're flying out of Florence, book your departure for after 5 p.m. See the following sections for information on train travel between Florence and other cities in Italy.

FLIGHT ARRANGEMENTS

This trip starts and ends in Florence, Italy. We suggest flying into Florence's Peretola Airport (airport code: FLR; www.aeroporto.firenze.it), which is located a few miles northwest of the city. From the airport, it's a short bus trip (\$7) or taxi ride (\$25–\$30) into town or to

the train station.

You can also fly into Rome (FCO; www.adr.it), Milan (MXP; www.sea-aeroportoimilano.it), Bologna (BLQ; www.bologna-airport.it) or Pisa (PSA; www.pisa-airport.com) and take the train to Florence. See the following sections for details.

For help arranging air transport to and from your Backroads trip, please work with your own travel agent or you may choose to work with the Backroads Travel Desk at Dimensions in Travel. Their expert travel advisors are ready to share their insiders' knowledge of Backroads and our worldwide destinations. These professional agents are available to assist you with any of your travel needs. Call 800-GO-ACTIVE (462-2848) to be connected with an advisor. Please note that consulting or ticketing fees may apply, depending on the services requested. The Backroads Travel Desk at Dimensions in Travel is open Monday–Friday, 9 a.m.–5 p.m. Pacific time.

PRIVATE TRANSFERS AROUND TUSCANY

For private car service in the Tuscany area, we recommend **Ricci Bus** (www.riccibus.com; +39-0577-226068). Ricci Bus serves the Florence and Rome airports and can provide transportation to and from our pick-up and drop-off locations for competitive rates. Let them know you're a Backroads guest. Keep Ricci Bus in mind for transportation if you plan to extend your stay in Tuscany before or after your Backroads trip.

TAKING THE TRAIN TO FLORENCE

From Rome

Getting from Rome's airport to Rome's train station: If you fly into Rome's Leonardo da Vinci (Fiumicino) airport, you can take the Leonardo Express commuter train directly from the airport to the Roma Termini train station. The train runs every 30 minutes, 6:38 a.m.–11:38 p.m.; travel time is 30 minutes and the fare is about \$15. Tickets can be purchased from the ticket counter or automated machines. Be sure to validate your ticket in one of the yellow stamping machines on the platform before boarding the train. You can also take a taxi to Roma Termini for about \$60. Supplements may be charged for excess luggage, and late-night and holiday trips.

Trains from Rome to Florence run about every 30 minutes. Travel time on the faster Eurostar Italia trains (Frecciarossa or Frecciargento) is 1½ hours; tickets start around \$40.

Expect to spend approximately 3 hours total traveling from the Rome airport to Florence's Santa Maria Novella train station.

From Milan

Getting from Milan's Malpensa or Linate airports to Milan's train station: The Malpensa Express train runs between Malpensa airport and Milano Centrale train station approximately every 30 minutes, 4:30 a.m.–12:30 a.m. Tickets cost around \$13 and travel time is about 45 minutes. The train stops at basement level in Terminal 1 at the airport. For more information, visit www.malpensaexpress.it. A taxi between Malpensa airport and the train station costs around \$90–\$120 and travel time is about 45 minutes. (Note that traffic can be heavy and may significantly increase travel time.)

Buses depart from Linate airport to Milano Centrale every 30 minutes, 6:30 a.m.–11:30 p.m. Tickets cost around \$6 and travel time is 25 minutes, depending on traffic. For more information, visit www.atm.it. If you plan to travel by taxi between Linate airport and the train station, expect to pay \$25–\$40.

Trains from Milan to Florence run frequently. Travel time on the Frecciarossa train is about 1¾ hours and tickets start at around \$50.

From Bologna

Getting from Bologna's airport to Bologna's Centrale train station: Bologna's airport is located about 4 miles from the Bologna Centrale train station. A shuttle bus is available for this 20-minute transfer and costs around \$7. You can also take a taxi for approximately \$25–\$35.

Trains from Bologna to Florence run regularly. Travel time on the faster Eurostar Italia trains (Frecciarossa or Frecciargento) is about 40 minutes; tickets start at around \$25. You can also take a 2-hour taxi ride to Florence for around \$300.

From Pisa

There's a direct shuttle bus running between Pisa's Galileo Galilei airport and Florence's Santa Maria Novella train station. Tickets cost about \$7 and the trip takes 1 hour. Visit www.terravision.eu/florence_pisa.html for more information. There is also a train that takes 1½ hours; tickets cost around \$6. The 2-hour taxi ride from the Pisa airport to Florence costs approximately \$300.

PRICES & SCHEDULES

All prices and schedules were current at the time of printing, but are subject to change at any time.

Destination Details

CLIMATE

Summertime in Tuscany is typically hot. Temperatures are generally a bit cooler in early May and late October. On most days you'll be comfortable biking in a short-sleeved jersey or synthetic T-shirt, although when you head out in the morning, you might want to wear a lightweight jacket or vest, arm warmers and knee/leg warmers. Rain is possible year-round—don't forget to bring waterproof breathable rain gear.

Florence

Average:	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
High °F	50	53	59	66	74	81
Low °F	35	37	41	46	52	59
Precip. inches	2.5	2.4	2.7	2.8	2.9	2.2
Average:	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
High °F	87	86	79	69	58	51
Low °F	62	62	57	50	43	37
Precip. inches	1.3	1.8	3.3	3.9	4.1	3.1



Getting Active for Your Trip

GARMIN EDGE EXPLORE 1000 GPS



Our new state-of-the-art GPS devices offer easy-to-follow directions and come pre-loaded with all the route options specific to your Backroads Biking Trip in Europe, North America and Hawaii.

ROUTE RATINGS

The routes on this trip are rated Levels 2–4.

ACTIVITY	BIKING		WALKING	
LEVEL Average Time (in hours)	Avg. Miles	Max Elev. Gain (feet)	Avg. Miles	Max Elev. Gain (feet)
1 (2-3 hrs)	8-22	1000	2-5	800
2 (2-4 hrs)	18-32	2200	4-7	1300
3 (3-5 hrs)	26-42	3400	5-9	2000
4 (4-6 hrs)	36-54	4400	6-11	3000
5 (5-7+ hrs)	48-70+	4400+	7-13+	4000+

Review the "Route Rating" section on the web for more details on daily route options.

CONDITIONING TIPS

Every Backroads trip is designed to appeal to a wide variety of interests and fitness levels. We know your pace may vary from one day to the next—and your traveling companions' may differ somewhat from yours. So we present a range of mileage options, and each day you decide exactly what and how much you want to do.

Before your trip, we suggest biking regularly and

hitting a few hills whenever you can. Review the route options in the daily itinerary for the range of mileages offered on this trip. But mostly, just show up and have fun!



Where to Stay Before & After Your Trip

For help making hotel reservations for before and after your Backroads trip:

- Work with your own professional travel agent.
- Contact the Backroads Travel Desk at Dimensions in Travel by calling 800-GO-ACTIVE (462-2848), Monday–Friday, 9 a.m.–5 p.m. Pacific time. Please note that consulting or ticketing fees may apply, depending on the services requested.
- Book directly with the hotel or through a discount website.

If you plan on extending your stay at our first night's hotel before the trip starts or our last night's hotel when the trip ends, let the hotel reservations agent know that you're traveling with Backroads; that way you may be able to avoid changing rooms.

The following is a selection of recommended properties that span a range of prices, amenities and locations, and are listed by price in descending order. Refer to the Hotel Room Rate Guide for the starting double-occupancy rates, which were accurate at time of printing. Note that rates are subject to change and some hotels may require a minimum stay. **Book early, especially during peak travel season!**

For more detailed reviews of some of the following properties and additional hotel suggestions (mostly in the four- and five-star price range), we recommend visiting www.indagare.com.

HOTEL ROOM RATE GUIDE (US Dollars Per Night)

\$501 and up	◆◆◆◆◆
\$300 to \$500	◆◆◆◆
\$201 to \$300	◆◆◆
Up to \$200	◆◆

FLORENCE

Hotel map: bit.ly/FlorenceHotels

St. Regis Florence

One of Europe's finest hotels, the historic Grand Hotel reopened as St. Regis Florence after a complete renovation in 2011. For an even more special stay, request a room with a view of the Arno River. *Travel + Leisure* World's Best. (spa) | Piazza Ognissanti 1 | www.stregisflorence.com | +39-055-27161 | 100 rooms & suites | Rates: ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

Hotel Helvetia & Bristol

Considered by many to be the quintessential Florentine hotel, this Leading Hotels of the World member offers timeless sophistication. Guests love the ideal location between Piazza della Repubblica and Via de' Tornabuoni. | Via dei Pescioni 2 | www.hotelhelvetiabristolflorence.com | +39-055-2665555 | 21 rooms & suites | Rates: ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

Hotel Savoy

With one of Florence's most enviable addresses on Piazza della Repubblica, just steps from the Duomo, Hotel Savoy wins over guests with its outstanding location and superior service. Request a room at the corner or on the top floor for spectacular city views. *Travel + Leisure* World's Best. | Piazza della Repubblica 7 | www.rocfortehotels.com/hotels-and-resorts/hotel-savoy | 888-667-9477 (from the US) or +39-055-27351 | 102 rooms & suites | Rates: ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

J.K. Place

This Leading Hotels of the World member is an unexpected find, situated in the heart of Florence and ready to treat you with "precious details and impeccable service." A Small Luxury Hotels of the World member. *Condé Nast Traveler* Gold List. | Piazza Santa Maria Novella 7 | www.jkplace.com | +39-055-2645181 | 20 rooms & suites | Rates: ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

Palazzo Magnani Feroni

For more than 500 years this regal residence has been at the center of Florence's aristocratic life. Just a 5-minute walk from the Ponte Vecchio, Magnani Feroni is perfectly situated for exploring San Frediano, one of the city's most historic neighborhoods. | Borgo San Frediano 5 | www.palazzomagnaniferoni.com | +39-055-2399544 | 12 suites | Rates: ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

Davanzati Hotel

The three-star Davanzati is a wonderful family-run hotel earning accolades for its attentive helpful

staff. | Via Porta Rossa 5 | www.hoteldavanzati.it | +39-055-286666 | 21 rooms & suites | Rates: ♦ ♦ ♦

Hotel Regency

This hotel has the feel of an exclusive private villa, with luxury accommodations and a tranquil setting. The Regency serves as a serene escape from the city's hustle and bustle. A Small Luxury Hotels of the World member. | Piazza Massimo d'Azeglio 3 | www.regency-hotel.com | +39-055-245247 | 35 rooms & suites | Rates: ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

Palazzo Niccolini al Duomo

In 1532 the Naldini family began transforming a collection of 14th-century houses near Piazza del Duomo into this lavish palazzo. Its prime *centro storico* address is another plus: the Duomo can be seen from many of the hotel windows. | Via dei Servi 2 | www.niccolinidomepalace.com | +39-055-282412 | 10 rooms & suites | Rates: ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

Room Mate Isabella

A former gathering place for European literati, this delightful hotel is in a recently renovated classic 19th-century building with a superb location on the fashionable Via de' Tornabuoni overlooking the magnificent Palazzo Strozzi. | Via Tornabuoni 13 | www.isabella.room-matehotels.com | +39-055-2396464 | 23 rooms & suites | Rates: ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

Hotel Il Guelfo Bianco

If you're looking for pleasant no-frills accommodations in the heart of Florence, the Guelfo Bianco—just 200 yards from the Duomo—is hard to beat. | Via Cavour 29 | www.ilguelfobianco.it | +39-055-288330 | 10 rooms | Rates: ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

Johanna & Johlea

While Florence has no shortage of outstanding hotels, it's also full of charming and elegant residence inns. We recommend any of the Johanna & Johlea properties. All offer superb locations in unique buildings (a 19th-century villa, for instance, or a 1920s garden townhouse), attentive staff, lovely furnishings and a warm ambience. **Please note that credit cards are not accepted at any of the Johanna & Johlea residences listed below. The properties are not staffed overnight, so you must check in by 7 p.m. Because Johanna & Johlea are such great finds in the city center, advance booking is key to securing a reservation; visit www.johanna.it for more information.**

Antica Dimora Firenze

Via San Gallo 72 | +39-055-4627296 | 6 rooms |
Rates: ♦ ♦

Residenza Johanna I

Via Bonifacio Lupi 14 | +39-055-481896 | 11 rooms |
Rates: ♦ ♦

Residenza Johanna II

Via Cinque Giornate 12 | +39-055-473377 | 7 rooms |
Rates: ♦ ♦

Residenza Johlea & Antica Dimora Johlea

Via San Gallo 76 & 80 | +39-055-4633292 | 12 rooms |
Rates: ♦ ♦

Relais Uffizi

This inn offers modest rooms, a friendly atmosphere and an unbeatable location. Stumble out of bed and you're in the beautiful Piazza della Signoria, within easy walking distance of museums and other points of interest. Street noise is to be expected in such a prime spot, so keep this in mind if you're a light sleeper. | Chiasso del Buco 16 | www.relaisuffizi.it | +39-055-2676239 | 13 rooms | Rates: ♦ ♦

MILAN

Hotel map: bit.ly/MilanPPH

Carlton Hotel Baglioni

If you plan to spend your time in Milan shopping, consider staying at this five-star Leading Hotels of the World member, which overlooks Via della Spiga, the city's most celebrated shopping street. (spa) | Via Senato 5 | www.baglionihotels.com | +39-02-77077 | 101 rooms & suites | Rates: ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

Four Seasons Hotel Milano

Ranked as one of the best hotels in the world by industry experts, the Four Seasons offers exactly what you'd expect from this luxury hotel chain: exceptional service, exquisite accommodations and a new, highly anticipated spa. If you plan to stay here during Fashion Week, book your room far in advance. *Travel + Leisure* World's Best. (spa) | Via Gesù 6/8 | www.fourseasons.com/milan | +39-02-77088 | 118 rooms & suites | Rates: ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

Grand Hotel et de Milan

Opera lovers will adore this majestic hotel, an Andrew Harper pick and a member of Leading Hotels of the World, which is located close to La Scala Opera House and fashionable avenues. | Via Manzoni 29 | www.grandhoteletdemilan.it | +39-02-723141 | 95 rooms & suites | Rates: ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

Hotel Spadari al Duomo

Fashionable, hip and whimsical, this modern boutique hotel offers a contrast to the grande dames with its sleek furnishings, all-blue interior and contemporary Milanese art. | Via Spadari 11 | www.spadarihotel.com | +39-02-72002371 | 40 rooms | Rates: ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

The Westin Palace

The Westin Palace features plush spacious guest rooms with classic Italian décor and Empire-style antiques. And you can look forward to those excellent signature Westin beds and showers. | Piazza della Repubblica 20 | www.westinpalacemilan.com | 800-937-8461 (from the US) or +39-02-63361 | 228 rooms & suites | Rates: ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

Hotel Straf

The innovative style manages to make high-tech functionality and minimalism warm, inviting and elegant, with industrial materials such as concrete, metal and slate at the center of the design. | Via San Raffaele 3 | www.straf.it | +39-02-805081 | 64 rooms & suites | Rates: ♦ ♦ ♦

Antica Locanda Leonardo

This family-run boutique hotel sits on the exclusive Corso Magenta in Milan's old quarter. Just a short walk away is the Church of Santa Maria delle Grazie, home to da Vinci's *The Last Supper*. | Corso Magenta 78 | www.anticolocandaleonardo.com | +39-02-48014197 | 16 rooms | Rates: ♦ ♦

First Hotel Malpensa Airport

Make catching that early flight from Malpensa Airport hassle-free. Located between Terminals 1 and 2, this contemporary hotel offers all the amenities you need, including a lobby bar and restaurant. A private shuttle service is available for travel between the hotel and both terminals. | Via Baracca 34 | www.firsthotel.it | +39-03-1717045 | 58 rooms | Rates: ♦ ♦

Hotel Lancaster

Within easy reach of the city sights from its setting in the tranquil residential district of Sempione, the Lancaster's classical contemporary-style guest rooms feature cherry wood furniture and bathrooms with marble tile. | Via Abbondio Sangiorgio 16 | www.hotel Lancaster.it | +39-02-344705 | 30 rooms | Rates: ♦ ♦

Hotel Sanpi Milano

This modern boutique hotel provides a great location near the historic center with convenient access to the

metro. It features contemporary art by Ercole Pignatelli. Most rooms overlook a private garden and all suites have whirlpool tubs. | Via Lazzaro Palazzi 18 | www.hotelsanpimilano.it | +39-02-29513341 | 79 rooms | Rates: ♦ ♦

ROME

Hotel map: bit.ly/RomePPH

Hotel de Russie

Set on Piazza del Popolo, this Leading Hotels of the World member feels more like an elegant private home than a hotel. Every detail has been thoughtfully considered, from the divine Italian linens to the magnificent gardens. *Travel + Leisure* World's Best. (pool, spa) | Via del Babuino | www.roccofortehotels.com | 888 667-9477 (from the US) or +39-063-28881 | 129 rooms & suites | Rates: ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

Hotel Eden

This Leading Hotels of the World member has been welcoming royalty and dignitaries since 1889. Request a room on the fourth floor to take in the vistas from the privacy of your own geranium-filled balcony. | Via Ludovisi 49 | www.edenroma.com | 800-543-4300 (from the US) or +39-064-78121 | 121 rooms & suites | Rates: ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

Hotel Hassler Roma

You'll find the hotel atop the Spanish Steps, just a stone's throw from the stunning Borghese Gardens. With a state-of-the-art fitness facility and Michelin-starred Imágo restaurant, it's no wonder that it's considered one of the world's finest hotels by industry mavens. *Travel + Leisure* World's Best. (spa) | Piazza Trinità dei Monti 6 | www.hotelhasslerroma.com | +39-066-9934755 | 95 rooms & suites | Rates: ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

Hotel Splendide Royal

This boutique hotel housed in a 19th-century palace is situated near Villa Borghese, three blocks from the Spanish Steps. Don't miss dining at the rooftop restaurant, Mirabelle. A Small Luxury Hotels of the World Member. | Via di Porta Pinciana 14 | www.splendideroyal.com | +39-064-21689 | 69 rooms & suites | Rates: ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

Hotel Alimandi Vaticano

Located across from the Vatican Museums is the luxurious Hotel Alimandi Vaticano, whose spacious Liberty-style guest rooms face the Vatican Museums' entrance. A rooftop terrace offers views over the Vatican walls. | Viale

Vaticano 99 | www.alimandivaticanohotel.com | +39-063-9745562 | 25 rooms & suites | Rates: ♦ ♦ ♦

Hotel Sole al Pantheon

Best known for its outstanding view of the Pantheon, Hotel Sole is one of Rome's oldest hotels, in operation since 1467. Ask for a room away from the piazza if you're sensitive to noise. (spa) | Piazza della Rotonda 63 | www.hotelsolealpantheon.com | +39-066-780441 | 31 rooms & suites | Rates: ♦ ♦ ♦

Best Western Hotel Canada

Built in 1870 to house the officials of Castro Pretorio and conveniently situated near the Termini train station, this Best Western offers air-conditioned guest rooms and breakfast with your stay. | Via Vicenza 58 | www.bestwestern.com | 800-780-7234 (from the US) or +39-064-457770 | 73 rooms | Rates: ♦ ♦

Capo d'Africa

This hotel benefits from a great location just steps from the Colosseum, between the Forum and Domus Aurea palace. | Via Capo d'Africa 54 | www.hotelcapodafrica.com | +39-067-72801 | 65 rooms & suites | Rates: ♦ ♦

Hotel Alimandi Tunisi

If you'd like to stay close to the Vatican Museums, an Alimandi brothers' hotel may be the perfect choice. Take in the spectacular view of St. Peter's Basilica while enjoying breakfast on the hotel's veranda. | Via Tunisi 8 | www.alimanditunisi.com | +39-063-9723941 | 35 rooms | Rates: ♦ ♦

Hotel Santa Maria

Set in the Trastevere quarter, this former 16th-century convent is within walking distance of Campo de' Fiori and Piazza Navona. Few tourists venture to the Trastevere, a wonderful neighborhood with a bohemian spirit, tiny streets, artisan shops, great restaurants and an active nightlife. | Vicolo del Piede 2 | www.htlsantamaria.com | +39-065-894626 | 19 rooms | Rates: ♦ ♦

Hotel Teatro di Pompeo

This quaint property was constructed over the ruins of the Theatre of Pompey, the site on which Julius Caesar was assassinated in 44 BC. Guest rooms are spacious, pleasant and quiet. | Largo del Pallaro 8 | www.hotelteatrodipompeo.it | +39-066-8300170 | 16 rooms | Rates: ♦ ♦

Mecenate Palace Hotel

A few blocks from the Termini train station, this 19th-

century home offers modern rooms and fantastic views of the Colosseum and Santa Maria Basilica from the rooftop garden terrace. | Via Carlo Alberto 3 | www.mecenatepalace.com | +39-064-4702024 | 74 rooms & suites | Rates: ♦ ♦

PISA

Hotel map: bit.ly/PisaHotels

Bagni di Pisa Resort & Medical Spa

An extensive renovation has turned this 18th-century property, set at the foot of Mount San Giuliano where thermal waters spring forth, into a luxurious wellness retreat. The resort is located 5 miles outside of Pisa, 15 minutes from the Pisa airport. (pool, spa) | Largo Shelley 18, San Giuliano | www.bagnidipisa.com | +39-050-88501 | 61 rooms & suites | Rates: ♦ ♦ ♦

Hotel Alessandro Della Spina

This tranquil three-star hotel in the city center is conveniently situated close to both the Pisa Centrale train station and the airport. | Via Alessandro Della Spina 5/7/9 | www.hoteldellaspina.it | +39-050-502777 | 16 rooms | Rates: ♦ ♦

San Ranieri Hotel

Hip, upscale and ultramodern, the San Ranieri is not your typical Pisa hotel. Set outside of the town center, you'll find guestrooms with streamlined surfaces, fanciful colors and back-lit mirrors. | Via Filippo Mazzei 2 | www.sanranierihotel.com | +39-050-971951 | 90 rooms & suites | Rates: ♦ ♦



Extending Your Vacation

Florence Walking Tours

Florence is brimming with so many artistic, historic and cultural sights, you could spend weeks exploring it. If you don't have that much time, however, you may want to organize a special outing.

Lise Apatoff (liseapatoff@msn.com; +39-333-4433509), a longtime Backroads friend and licensed city guide, is happy to customize walking tours to your interests. A Florence resident since 1978, Lise specializes in art, architecture, food and culture. The cost is approximately \$65 per hour.

Florence Cooking Classes

Learn the secrets to fine Florentine cooking at the **Apicius International School of Hospitality** in Florence. Apicius offers everything from wine appreciation and cooking classes, to tours of cooking supply shops, dinners in private Tuscan homes and gastronomic walking tours. Opt for a group or individual lesson, or customize your own program. Visit amateur.apicius.it for more information.

The Florence Chefs (Barbara and Silvia) cooking school and **Olio, The Florence School of Olive Oil**, offer a wide range of classes and services, including sessions on olive oil and food tours. Learn to make pizza and focaccia, homemade pasta or traditional pastries like cannoli and tiramisu. For a more intimate experience, book a class at Silvia's apartment or Barbara's country home, which start with a visit to the local market then a hands-on experience in preparing a complete meal: one starter, one pasta dish, a meat or fish dish, a side dish, dessert and matching wines. Visit www.theflorencechefs.it and www.florenceoliveoilschool.com for more information.

Arezzo

The enchanting hilltop town of Arezzo was the setting for Roberto Benigni's Oscar-winning *La Vita è Bella* (*Life is Beautiful*). There are several interesting museums to visit here, and the town is also known for its antiques fair, which takes place the first weekend of the month. Arezzo can be reached by train from major Italian cities.