



Siena & Central Tuscany

Includes ➔

Siena.....	189
Chianti.....	202
Greve in Chianti.....	205
Castellina in Chianti..	209
Val d'Elsa.....	211
San Gimignano.....	211
Volterra.....	216
Val d'Orcia.....	222
Montalcino.....	222
Pienza.....	224
Monticchiello.....	227
Val di Chiana.....	227
Montepulciano.....	227

Why Go?

When people imagine classic Tuscan countryside, they usually conjure up images of central Tuscany. However, there's more to this popular region than gently rolling hills, sun-kissed vineyards and artistically planted avenues of cypress trees. The real gems here are the historic towns and cities, most of which are medieval and Renaissance time capsules magically transported to the modern day.

This privileged pocket of the country has maintained a high tourist profile ever since the Middle Ages, when Christian pilgrims followed the Via Francigena from Canterbury to Rome. Towns on the route catered to the needs of these pilgrims and local economies prospered as a result. Today, not a lot has changed: tourism is the major industry and travellers are still thick on the ground.

Come here for art, for architecture and for gastronomy. But most of all, come here for enchantment.

Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Enoteca I Terzi (p200)
- ➔ Il Leccio (p224)
- ➔ I Sette Consoli (p230)
- ➔ La Grotta (p231)

Best Places to Stay

- ➔ La Bandita (p223)
- ➔ La Casa di Adelina (p227)
- ➔ Pensione Palazzo Ravizza (p199)
- ➔ Podere San Lorenzo (p218)

Road Distances

Siena	70			
San Gimignano	112	46		
Volterra	120	50	30	
Greve in Chianti	102	48	33	53
Montepulciano				
Siena				
San Gimignano				
Volterra				

DON'T MISS

You'll need to adopt the same breakneck pace as a Palio entrant to do justice to Siena in one day – its Gothic art and architecture deserve leisurely investigation.

Best Wine Tastings

- ➔ Antinori nel Chianti Classico (p208) Admire cutting-edge architecture at this flagship wine estate.
- ➔ Castello di Ama (p211) Taste award-winning wine and wander through a sculpture garden.
- ➔ Poggio Antico (p224) Tour high-tech cellars and taste award-winning Brunellos.

Advance Planning

- ➔ Reserve terrace tickets for Siena's Palio a year in advance.
- ➔ Book to visit the wine estates of Castello di Ama (p211), Antinori nel Chianti Classico (p208) and Castello di Volpaia (p210).
- ➔ Check the website to time your visit to the Abbazia di Sant'Antimo (p225) to coincide with Gregorian chanting.

Resources

- ➔ **Terre di Siena** (www.teresiena.it)
- ➔ **Toscana & Chianti News** (www.toscanaechiantinews.com)

Getting Around

Siena is the region's major transport hub, with buses zooming up and down the *S2 superstrada* (expressway) between it and Florence and also travelling to other major cities in the country. Buses travel between Siena and smaller towns throughout the area, although services can be infrequent and connections convoluted. There are few primary train routes: the only truly useful service is between Siena and Grosseto. Most towns and cities have strictly enforced *Zone a Traffico Limitato* (Limited Traffic Zones; ZTLs) in their historic centres.

THREE PERFECT DAYS**Day 1: Touring Chianti**

Spend a day visiting grand wine estates and sampling modern Tuscan cuisine. Prime your palate at the recently opened Antinori nel Chianti Classico (p208) near Florence and then wend your way south to Siena through scenic secondary roads in the Chianti Fiorentino and Chianti Senese, stopping for tastings and lunch along the way.

Day 2: Val d'Elsa

Two of the region's most compelling attractions are perched atop hills in the Val d'Elsa. Spend the morning exploring the cobbled streets of Volterra, admiring artefacts in the Museo Etrusco Guarnacci (p216) and visiting alabaster ateliers where artisans have worked for millennia. Then head to the perfectly preserved medieval town of San Gimignano (p211) to follow an artistic itinerary that balances the gravitas of the old (Collegiata) with the exhilaration of the new (Galleria Continua).

Day 3: Around Montalcino

Another wine-related day (you are in Tuscany, after all!). Start at the majestic medieval abbey of Sant'Antimo (p225), where you might be lucky enough to hear the resident monks chanting during mass. Then drive through vineyards laden with sangiovese grapes to enjoy lunch with local winemakers at Il Leccio (p224). In the afternoon, head to the fortified town of Montalcino (p222), home to one of the world's great wines, Brunello.

Off the Beaten Track

- ➔ To avoid Siena's madding crowds, make your way to the Orto de' Pecci (p197), an urban farm, vineyard and medieval garden spread over one of the city's green valleys.
- ➔ Tramp along parts of the medieval pilgrimage route known as the Via Francigena (p216).
- ➔ Meditate in the tranquil environs of the Abbazia di San Galgano (p222), a ruined 13th-century abbey south of Siena.