



THE ULTIMATE TRAVEL COMPANY

## THE WALKING PARTY

### ITINERARY FOR FIVE DAYS ITALY: UMBRIA

Price: £ 1020    Single Supplement: £190

Dates: 15<sup>th</sup> - 19<sup>th</sup> June 2010

Distance : 19 miles

Walking : moderate +



This is a five day trip to take you through Umbria and a flash of Tuscany to show you the best that there is in terms of culture and gastronomy. It is a teaser for you to go back and look at everything in more depth. A mixing all the best things that Umbria has to offer. The green heart of Italy, as it is known, has an unending quantity of gems in each category be it gastronomic, floral, cultural or of just outstanding landscape beauty. Two of the great Christian saints were born here. You stay in Norcia the birthplace of St Benedict, nestled at the foot of the Sibillini mountains. You visit the resting place of St Francis, which is, much to Francis' chagrin, the most opulent monument of medieval art in Italy. Also colouring your trip are the fantastic people and their food.

**Day 1 ARRIVAL** You will be met in Rome at the Fiumicino airport for the BA afternoon flight arrival (scheduled at the moment for 16.15) by James and Diana and driven to the Grotta Azzura Hotel in the centre of the village of Norcia. It is a wonderful ancient hotel with true Fellini character: lots of action, "Mama mia!" and "Madonna!" and doors flapping to and fro. It is the central buzz area of this remote part of Umbria! Norcia is the birthplace of St Benedict and sits within its curtain wall surrounded by the towering tops of the Sibillini mountains. We have a great welcome from Anna and Carlo Bianconi and this is the perfect place to start the Umbrian experience! It is truly fifties in character and the rooms can be seen as having little changed since. Should you feel that you may like to have a slightly more modern and spacious room then we could upgrade you to the Palazzo Seneca (situated next door and owned too by the Bianconi family) but there would of course be a surcharge for this. Please ask for details.

**Day 2 WALK DAY SANT EUTIZIO** You awake to the peel of the church bells. After blood red orange juice and strong black coffee and all other breakfast delights we leave behind the curtain wall of Norcia and climb the mountains in the vehicles to meet Roberto our muleteer and the mules to set off for the mornings walk through the beautiful beech woods to Sant' Eutizio. This small abbey was a founding stone of the Benedictine movement and we will eat lunch in the tiny *ristorante* opposite.

After lunch we will return to Norcia for a cooking lesson with the head chef of the Grotta Azzurra. This is a great cooking event and you will see just how much work is involved in making your own tortellini! Dinner at the hotel. *Walk: 5 miles*

**Day 3 ASSISI and PERUGIA** After an early morning breakfast, we leave by car for Assisi and the great Christian masterwork of San Francesco. We will have a look at the outstanding fresco cycles attributed to Giotto of the beginning of 14<sup>th</sup> century and then, in the lower church, spend some time on the magical chapel of San Martino painted by Simone Martini only ten years later. We will see instantly the difference between the Sienese and Florentine schools. Both majestically beautiful but one more concerned with a two dimensional surface and the beauty of line and expression and the other preoccupied with the sense of mass in space. We move on then by car for a walk to the pretty walled medieval village of Bevagna. Lunch here 'alla tavola' with the beautiful Assunta. We drive after lunch to the great city of Perugia. Here we will visit the most extraordinary wonderful work of Perugino in the Collegio di Cambio and the equally extraordinary Collegio della Mercanzia next door. You return to Norcia by car. Dinner Norcia. *8 miles*

**Day 4 WALK DAY CASTELLUCCIO** A day of walking to the glacial crater of Castelluccio. This is indeed a marvellous sight. We are quite high here at about 1450 metres but the climbing is not too steep and stunning. The scrub hugs the hills like beize to a billiard table and spinneys of beech are scattered like sporadic limpets on a rock. The flowers are excellent, indeed the glacial crater can be turned into one of the great flower wonders of the world with a plethora of stunning colour hitting you as you walk over the top of the peak. Poppies, lentil flowers, meadow clary, orchids and peonies are high up on the list, even the thistles are lovely! We will walk up with Roberto and the mules, before a well earned drink and picnic lunch at Castelluccio with fantastic scenery around before we continue on another circuit to see the stunning carpets of ox-eye daisies, poppies, cornflowers and innumerable other flowers. Dinner at the Grotta Azzurra. *10 miles*



**Day 5 ORVIETO** We drive down to the great citadel of Orvieto which sits like the Acropolis in majesty on a dramatic rock outcrop dominated by its towering Gothic cathedral. We will visit the great fresco cycle by Signorelli which blames mankind for his woes. Extraordinary depictions of damnation and Armageddon, the Apocalypse and the end of the world! It is **the** fresco cycle to finish the holiday! After lunch in Orvieto we continue for the flight in Rome.

Of course there is always the option to stay a couple of days in Rome and we would be delighted to help with that itinerary.

**NOTE:** This tour starts & ends at the Rome airports of Fiumicino and Ciampino. The itinerary is subject to change according to local conditions. All mileages shown are approximate.

**For further information and reservations please contact  
Jane Robinson on 020 7386 4695**