

## **Escape to Tuscany** *Pisa's 'Field of Miracles' and Siena's spectacular medieval square are unforgettable.*

With Pisa, Siena and Florence all less than an hour away and plenty of activities nearby, Escape to Tuscany is the perfect setting for family holidays, weddings and parties, romantic getaways, spa breaks, golfing weekends, or cultural tours of the surrounding region.

Prices start from as little as £150 per person per week, or under £100 for four days...

Just about any activity you can think of can be arranged for you...

### **Culture**

History and heritage are sacrosanct to all Italians. From the beautiful architecture, frescos and art to the time-honoured traditions of truffle hunting and the violent spectacle of the Palio, all have been preserved to pass on to future generations of the all-important famiglia.

Almost every single village and town in Tuscany is proud of its ancient heritage and will have some prized religious artefact or painting for the visitor to discover. Ancient Etruscan and Roman remains are almost commonplace in Tuscany, with some of the most outstanding being found in the spectacular hill fortress town of Volterra, just a short drive from San Martino, where there is an Etruscan museum, Etruscan remains and an impressive Roman theatre and ruins.

The historic Tuscan cities of Florence (1hr), Siena (45mins) and Pisa (1hr) are all easily accessible and should not be missed - Florence's busy Ponte Vecchio, the leaning Tower of Pisa's 'Field of Miracles' and Siena's spectacular medieval square are unforgettable, or lose yourself in one of the many museums or art galleries or just wandering around the historic streets.

**Art courses** taught by a local artist who also lectures in the University of Florence: Carlo Romiti has been painting for years using earth which he himself collects from the local area. Following an ancient technique, the dried raw earth is pounded in stone mortars and sifted, mixed with water, egg or different glues, or even flax oil, to create paints with their own natural 'brightness'. These are used to create incredible original canvases which express the wildness and movement of nature, which is mirrored in Carlo's sculptures in stone, bronze, wood and ceramic – his favourite subjects are those that surround him: horses and dogs, roe deer and wild boars in the nearby woods, and the local landscape.

### **Food & Wine**

Tuscany is a gastronomic delight. Ripened under the glorious sun even the simplest tomatoes taste truly delicious... sliced on toasted ciabatta, drizzled with olio and grazed with herbs from the garden, they take on a whole new meaning...

**Restaurants** are plentiful and extremely good in the area around San Martino. Fattorias, osterias and restaurants offering local delicacies such as crostini, cinghiale and porcini abound in the many tiny villages and hamlets close to San Martino and cater for every budget.

**In house cooks** can also be arranged for those not wanting to stray from their villa. Cooks will cater for 6 up to 60 people and prices range from E20.00 to E40.00 pp. They must be booked a minimum of 1 month in advance.

**Wine** is produced to a high standard at many of the local vineyards (a couple within walking distance). Wine tastings can be arranged at some of the many fine wine producers within the region. The quality of wine in the Tuscan region has improved notably over the last 20 years and the new super Tuscans rival the finest wines in the world. Expect to also find high quality honeys, grappas and sweet wines.

**Cooking** lessons from Bruno Staccioli: Born in Colle di Val D'Elsa, Bruno has dedicated his life to writing, painting and cooking. Starting his cooking career in famous restaurants in Italy and Paris, he later opened his own restaurant in Colle which was favourably reviewed by international food critics. He now lives in the countryside near Poggibonsi, where he has his studio, and works as head chef at an organic food restaurant. Bruno is happy to visit San Martino to teach you the basics of Italian cooking or, for more experienced cooks, advanced techniques and recipes.

## **Outdoor Activities**

**Golf** is a relatively undiscovered pleasure in Tuscany: There are a number of visually stunning and challenging courses in the region, seven of which are within an hour's drive of the properties. The nearest, Castelalfi Golf and Country Club, is just 15 minutes' drive away and presents a tough, but fascinating test. In contrast to many better-known venues, most golf courses in Tuscany are not overplayed and are readily accessible to both the casual visitor and organised tour parties. The location of San Martino means that you are in the ideal location to experience seven of the best courses in Tuscany. A driver can be arranged to suit your parties requirements.

**Horse-riding** is available within 15 minutes' drive. Hack in the spectacular countryside, or take lessons from beginner level to advanced dressage, in the capable hands of qualified instructors. Both Western and English styles are catered for, on a variety of highly-trained, quality horses.

**Other activities included guided walks, cycling, Tennis (courts 15 minutes away) and Skiing.** For those staying a week or so there is skiing in the newly developed Abbetone range, about 1.5 hours' drive away.

**Spa breaks - A girls' weekend away**.....or an alternative hen party – San Martino is the perfect venue to spend some quality time with your friends. You could start off by unwinding in our blissful spa with relaxing essential oils, beautiful Jacuzzi, sauna and steam room... If that isn't enough pampering for you, we can arrange a visit from a beauty therapist for some on-site treatments... Enjoy meals cooked for you at one of the many local restaurants... Shop 'til you drop at San Gimignano, Florence or Siena, or at designer outlet stores for D&G, Prada, Gucci and more – all within an hours drive - or simply stock up on wonderful Tuscan specialities – amazing olive wood or glass crafts, fine wines and foods...follow the example of our last girls' party who departed happily laden with delicious olive oils, salamis, cheeses, wine, cakes and chocolates... Enjoy some culture – visit one of the art galleries in San Gimignano, or take a trip to the Uffizi in Florence... Above all, enjoy getting away from it all in San Martino's peaceful surroundings.

Other services are available on request. For further details please have a look at the attached brochure and price list.