

Jacqueline Coates with Tuscany Under the Skin

Italian Arts & Garden Tour 09

Friday 29th May - Weds 10th June

12 nights and 13 days exploring Tuscany, Florence and Rome.

"After last year's Arts and Garden's tour, I headed to Italy to research the next trip's wish list. I also met up with tour guides and Italian specialists Barbara and Ugo Mariotti from Tuscany Under the Skin.

We visited and planned the special places that make up this fabulous 2009 itinerary so I can thoroughly recommend what's in store. We are finalizing a few small details but this is the tour outline for you to peruse. The finalised itinerary complete with all inclusions and hotel details, final price and booking form will be available on my website www.jacquelinecoates.com by the last week of August along with terms and conditions. You are welcome to register your interest with me in the meantime as it is small group only and numbers are limited.

This year the tour has Barbara or Ugo or at times both, as our hospitable and knowledgeable guides. There are optional opportunities for sketching, painting or collaged postcard art. I will provide convenient handbag size watercolour and paper sets for you and any tuition you need. There is even a spot of authentic Tuscan hands on cooking included. The pace is relaxed yet rich with culture and beauty. There are many inclusions and some free time."

Jacqueline Coates August 2008

Top left; Jacqueline Coates on the Ponte Vecchio Florence on last year's tour. Above Right; Barbara & Ugo Mariotti at the farmhouse where we will have a picnic Day 5



DAY 1 Friday 29 May - Arrival in Siena

Arrival into Rome airport and transfer to Siena. This ancient Gothic town is World Heritage listed. The Siennese have proudly maintained old traditions including 'lo struscio', a leisurely evening walk through the winding streets down to the 'Campo', the beautiful rose-gold square where twice each year they run the 'Palio', a medieval bareback horserace. We join them for an enchanting stroll through the old streets to the original marketplace where we enjoy a 'welcome to Tuscany aperitif and dinner on the Campo. Admire the marzipan creations and the slabs of panneforte in the shop windows, or better still try some!

ACCOMMODATION: Minerva Hotel SIENA

DAY 2 Saturday 30 May - Siena & San Gimignano

In the morning a walking tour of the city of Siena including entry to the Duomo, a magnificent black and white striped marble church as



ornate on the inside as the outside. Among many other things Siena has the most stunning collection of Gothic Art.



In the afternoon we visit San Gimignano whose famous medieval towers still dominate the skyline. Stroll through the town and the evocative Piazza della Cisterna and perhaps enjoy one of Sergio Dondoli's award-winning gelatos.

You can explore the old fortress or climb one of the towers. Visit the Collegiata with its famous fresco cycles of the Old and New Testaments. San Gimignano is still a town of artists and artisans who often work in their shops and are happy to receive interested visitors.

During the afternoon there will be free time to browse through the many shops that line the narrow streets of this unique city of towers. Dinner.

ACCOMMODATION: Minerva Hotel SIENA

DAY 3 Sunday 31 May - Montepulciano & Montalcino

Travel through the picturesque Tuscan countryside to Montepulciano with a stop on the way at Montalcino, an important town for the local wine industry.

There we will have a tasting of some of its famous Brunello wine before exploring the museum gallery of Montalcino with its important collection.



Your accommodation for the next 6 nights will be at Il Borghetto in Montepulciano (to be confirmed). Dinner.

ACCOMMODATION: MONTEPULCIANO

DAY 4 Monday 01 June - The garden of La Ragnaia

Today we take the scenic road to the ancient and most unusual monastery Monte Oliveto Maggiore set in an extraordinary landscape in the Tuscan 'crete', the clay hills. Monte Oliveto is still run by the Benedictine order that produce wines, herbal oils and restore antique books. A particular

feature of the monastery is a series of beautiful frescoes tracing the life and miracles of San Benedetto. The frescoes were painted by Luca Signorelli and Giovanni Bazzi better known as 'Sodoma'.

In the late afternoon we will visit "La Ragnaia" a very interesting forest and field garden that is being created by artist Sheppard Craige with a mix of the traditional Italianate garden and Zen concepts. Dinner own arrangements.

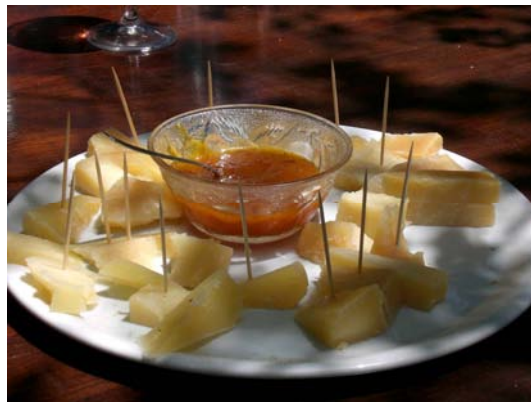
ACCOM: MONTEPULCIANO



DAY 5 Tuesday 02 June - Pienza, Bagno Vignoni



In the morning, visit the early Renaissance town of Pienza, famous for its architecture and its Pecorino (sheep's) cheese. Then walk the high road near Vignoni Alto in the Val d'Orcia to a farmhouse picnic lunch of local produce and their own DOC wines. Afterwards visit Bagno Vignoni, an ancient spa village once used by the Etruscans and Romans. A large modern outdoor pool with extraordinary views is available for a relaxing bathe in the thermal waters. Pack your swimsuit. Dinner own arrangements.
ACCOM : MONTEPULCIANO



DAY 6 Wednesday 03 June - 'Trove' & the garden of La Foce

In the morning transfer to Barbara and Ugo's farmhouse "Trove". The farm is 18 hectares and surrounded by vineyards and olive groves. Choose from a 'hands on' cooking lesson on how to prepare a typical Tuscan farm lunch or go landscape painting with Jacqueline in the beautiful Tuscan countryside with magnificent views from Trove toward Sant' Anna in Camprena where some of the scenes from The English Patient were filmed.

Lunch for all! After lunch visit "La Foce" a garden created by Anglo-American writer Iris Origo whose insightful biographies and moving accounts of WWII are much in demand. Iris' own story and that of her Italian husband Count Antonio Origo will add extra depth to our visit of their delightful garden that reflects the mix of their cultures. Dinner own arrangements. You may choose from the many and varied restaurants in Montepulciano. ACCOMM: MONTEPULCIANO





DAY 7 Thursday 04 June - Montepulciano & Chiusi



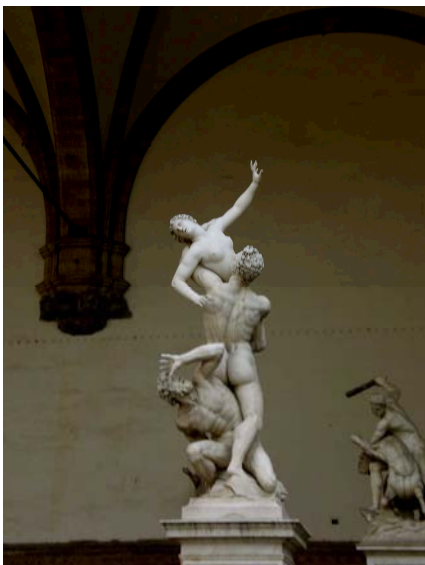
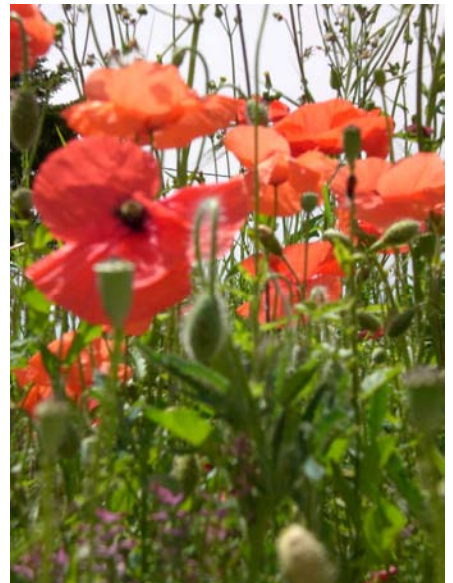
Join the locals at the colourful market in Montepulciano as they buy pecorino cheese, porcini mushrooms, clothing & tractors, before exploring this famous hilltop town that offers a wide range of handcrafted goods. Montepulciano is the home of the *Vino Nobile* one of the most famous of the Tuscan wines. Take time to explore the town that has a strong artist/artisan tradition. Be sure to stop at the lovely Art Deco Café 'Il Poliziano' with lovely

views over the lakes of Montepulciano, Chiusi and Trasimeno, perhaps for a light lunch! In the afternoon transfer to Chiusi and visit the excellent Etruscan museum before enjoying dinner at the nearby lake where the speciality is lake fish. ACCOMMODATION: MONTEPULCIANO

DAY 8 Friday 05 June - Cortona

Today we travel to the famous little town of Cortona. More recently subject of Frances Mayes "Under the Tuscan Sun", Cortona is an absolute jewel of a hill-top town, Etruscan in origin, with one of Italy's best views from its walls. It is the birthplace the famous Tuscan artist Luca Signorelli whose paintings are among other famous works in the small museum that you will visit. We recommend you don't miss "The Annunciation" of Beato Angelico.

After lunch, there's time to explore the excellent shopping opportunities offered in Cortona. Particularly the range of jewellery which includes antiques and exquisite replicas of Etruscan pieces, fabrics and craftwork. The town is particularly famous for its art galleries, antique shops and specializes in the restoration of antique furniture.



DAY 9 Saturday 06 June - Florence

Today we transfer to Florence. Perhaps no other city in the world has so much history, art and culture in such a compact area. The Duomo, Florence's huge cathedral which dominates the city; the magnificent gothic Santa Croce where so many famous Florentines are buried; the Piazza della Signoria; the impressive Palazzo Vecchio.....and so the list goes on! Dinner.

ACCOMMODATION: Florence

DAY 10 Sunday 07 June

During our exploration of Florence today, a guided tour of the Uffizi will be included. In the afternoon we can take our time strolling through the Boboli Gardens which were

created by the Medici family after taking over the Pitti Palace in the mid 16th Century.

They are a superb example of a stylized renaissance garden. And there will then be time to wander back across the Ponte Vecchio, known for it's jewellers and antiques and explore more of this incredible city. Dinner own arrangements. ACCOMMODATION: Florence



DAY 11 Monday 08 June

Transfer to Rome. More details to come here as there will be time to explore...TBC Dinner own arrangements or go with Jacqueline to discover one of Rome's many restaurants. ACCOMMODATION: Rome

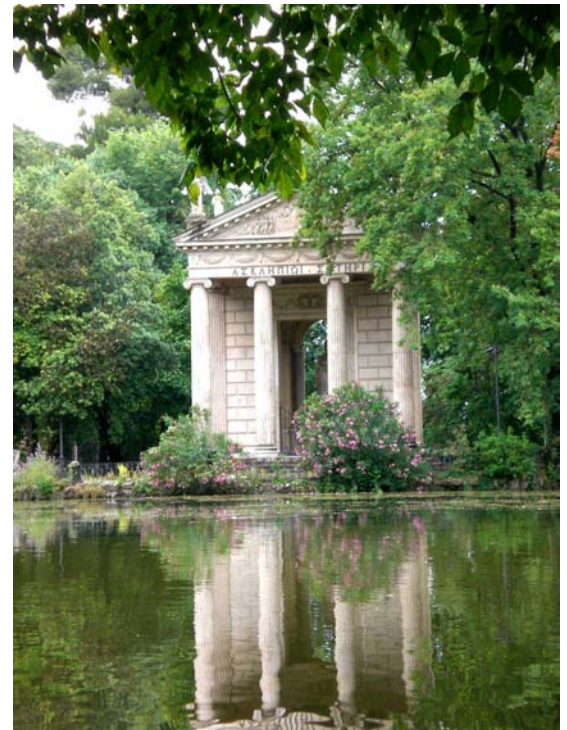


DAY 12 Tuesday 09 June - Rome & Borghese Gardens

A visit to the beautiful Villa Borghese & Gardens has been arranged for today. In addition there will be ample time to wander up the Spanish Steps,

stroll along the Via Condotti one of the famous fashion streets of Rome or visit the Trevi Fountain. Optional visit to the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea which houses not only the Italian version of the Impressionists but the Italian Futurists and many international artists such as Gustave Klimt, Monet, Van Gogh and Cezanne. Expect some surprises when you are introduced to some of the lesser known parts of Rome! Farewell Dinner.

ACCOMMODATION: Rome



DAY 13 Wednesday 10 June

Independent departure from Rome. Jacqueline on hand to assist with departure arrangements.

Inclusions:

- Fully guided each day by experienced tour leaders Ugo or Barbara Mariotti
- Accompanied throughout by Jacqueline Coates
- Travel size watercolours and paper and sketchbook provided.

- Transportation in private air-conditioned 9 seater vehicle
- Accommodation Siena: Hotel Minerva standard rooms with private facilities
- Accommodation Montepulciano: rooms with private facilities details to be confirmed
- Accommodation Florence: tbc
- Accommodation Rome: tbc
- Italian continental breakfast daily (B)
- 8 dinners/lunches with wine (1/4 bottle each)(L), (D)
- 1 welcome drinks (apertif)
- 1 farm picnic
- 1 cooking lesson & farm lunch at Trove (L)
- Coach access fee for Florence
- 1 city tour Siena
- Transfers from Rome to Siena
- Guided tour of the Uffizi Gallery in Florence
- 6 entries; Galleria Villa Borghese, Bagno Vignoni, La Foce Gardens, La Ragnaia Gardens, Museum of Etruscan Art at Cortona, Museum of Montalcino,
- Transfers from Florence to Rome
- 1 wine tasting
- Luggage transfers
- Porterage in and out of hotels

TOUR PRICE Approx \$6280 (TBC in final itinerary) plus airfares (Australian dollars).
Single supplement \$930

PRICES VALID TO 31 OCTOBER 2009

BOOKING CONDITIONS:

To be provided with final itinerary.

Booking Agent; Tegan Peters
Windsong Travel Pty Ltd
License Number 2TA4062
IATA Number 02342734
45 Byron Street
Inverell NSW 2360
Australia
Phone (61) 2 6722 3011
Fax (61) 2 6722 2402
Email inverell@harveyworld.com.au

SUGGESTED READING LIST:

Under the Tuscan Sun - Frances Mayes
Bella Tuscany - Frances Mayes
The Hills of Tuscany - Feranc Mate (about Montepulciano)
Dolce & Salata (A bittersweet adventure in Tuscany) - Malena de Blasi
War in the Val D'Orcia - Iris Origo
Images and Shadows Iris Origo
The Italians Luigi Barzini
Etruscan Places D H Lawrence
Tuscan Cookbook Stephanie Alexander
Tuscan Elements Alexandra Black & Simon McBride
Within Tuscany Matthew Spender
Guide Books:
Lonely Planet, The Green Guide, Eyewitness Guide (Dorling & Kindersley)

SOME DESCRIPTIONS:

Bagno Vignoni:

This tiny medieval spa village dates back to Roman times. The hot sulphurous water bubbles up into a picturesque pool, built by the Medici in the town's main square. Some 36 springs cook up at 51 degrees Celsius to collect in the pool. Famous people who have sought a cure in Bagno Vignoni include St Catherine of Siena (who suffered from a form of tuberculosis) and Lorenzo the Magnificent (to relieve his arthritis).

Chiusi:

This quiet town was built on an easily-defended hilltop as it was once one of the 12 sovereign towns of the Etruscan confederation. It derived its prosperity not only from the farmland in the surrounding fertile plain but also from its control of the Chiana, then a tributary of the Tiber, which therefore linked the town to Rome and the sea. The National Etruscan museum contains numerous artefacts excavated in local graveyards and presented in a display illustrating Etruscan art and civilisation as it existed in the Chiusi region.

Montepulciano:

Montepulciano occupies a remarkably picturesque setting on top of a hill separating two valleys and, at 605 m (1,950 feet) above sea level, it is one of the highest of Tuscany's hilltop towns. Inside the city walls the streets are crammed with Renaissance-style palazzi and churches and a long winding street called the Corso climbs up to the main square. On the Corso is the well known Art Deco Caffè Poliziano. One of the most famous red wines of Tuscany is the *Vino Nobile di Montepulciano*, made from Sangiovese grapes grown on the hills around the town.

Pienza:

A superb example of Renaissance architecture, this town was designed and built in the mid-15th Century by the Florentine architect Bernardo Rossellino on the orders of Pope Pius II, Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini, who was born there in 1405. The Pope even had the town's name changed from Corsignano.

The most important buildings are grouped around Piazza Pio II, very close to our hotel. The square was designed by Rossellino, who left nothing to chance. The available space was limited, so to increase the sense of perspective and dignity of the great edifices that would grace the square, Rossellino set the Palazzo Borgia and Palazzo Piccolomini off at angles to the cathedral.

San Gimignano:

The "City of Beautiful Towers" is one of the best preserved medieval towns in Tuscany. Its stunning skyline bristles with tall towers dating from the 13th century: 14 of the original 76 have survived. These windowless towers were built to serve both as private fortresses and symbols of their owners' wealth. In the Piazza della Cisterna, ringed by a jumble of unspoilt 13th and 14th century palazzi (town houses of stature), is a wellhead built in 1237. Shops, galleries and jewellers line the two main streets, Via San Matteo and Via San Giovanni, which still retain their medieval feel.

The distinctive skyline of San Gimignano must have been a welcome sight to the faithful in medieval times, for the town lay on the main pilgrim route from northern Europe to Rome. This gave rise to its great prosperity at that time, when its population was twice what it is today.

Siena:

Siena is without doubt one of Italy's most enchanting cities. The principal sights are found in the network of narrow streets and alleys around the fan-shaped Piazza del Campo. The buildings around this square symbolize the golden age of the city between 1260 and 1348, when wealthy citizens contributed to a major programme of civic building.

Scarcely any street is level as Siena, like Rome, is built on seven hills.

This adds to the pleasure of exploring: one minute the city is laid out to view before you and the next you are in a warren of medieval houses. Packed into Siena are the 17 contrade (parishes) whose animal symbols are everywhere on carvings, plaques and car stickers.

THE ETRUSCANS:

The Etruscans appear to have founded settlements as early as the 9th century BC and by the 6th century had become the dominant power in central Italy. Territory in their control stretched from Rome in the south to the Apennines. The Etruscan settlements were largely independent of each other and they are said to have formed a league, the 12-city Dodecapolis for the celebration of annual religious festivities more than anything else. In times of conflict they helped each other out. Starting in the 7th century BC the Etruscans embarked on repeated campaigns of conquest across the peninsula and they helped make Rome the centre of power in Latium. Whatever control the Etruscans had over the Latin towns evaporated by 392 BC when the Romans rebelled and took Veio, an Etruscan stronghold 15km north of Rome. Shortly afterwards all of southern Etruria was under Roman influence and in 351BC the Etruscans sued for peace.

LA FOCE: "This is undoubtedly one of the most beautiful modern gardens in Tuscany. It is probable that the owner Iris Origo, a refined writer and author of the historical novel "The Merchant of Prato", perceived this place as a landscape marked by striking contrasts. In the late 1920s she and her husband Antonio bought an abandoned estate and transformed it into a magnificent villa with a model farm. The English architect and landscape artist, Cecil Pinsent, a friend of Iris Origo, was commissioned to carry out the work, in a project that went on until 1939. He created the garden in different stages, but always according to a unitary logic, drawing inspiration from the formal gardens of classic Italian tradition. Pinsent also renovated the building and designed the limonaia (lemon garden) and other annexes.

In 1927 the first formal garden, bounded to the south by a wall with a fountain and a green grotto concealed by a dome of laurel, was built in front of the house. From here a path leads to the lemon garden, begun in 1933. It is adorned by box trimmed in spherical shapes and bordered along the sides by herbaceous plants and splendid peonies. The transverse axis of the garden continues, rising along an avenue of cypress trees to the top of the hill.

In 1939 the monumental geometric garden was laid out below the lemon garden. It is reached by descending a stairway built of Rapolano travertine. Below the stairway is a grotto. Bordered by great box hedges, dominated by four magnolias and enclosed by high walls of cypresses, the triangular space ends in a pool and a statuary group. A long pergola of wisteria bounds the formal garden at the top, while on the other side of the berceau runs a narrow terrace containing a rose garden with borders of lavender and herbaceous perennials, among which emerge clumps of aubretia and alyssum.

Following the wisteria pergola we arrive a strikingly panoramic spot overlooking the broad landscape of the Val d'Orcia, marked by the avenue of cypresses planted by Iris Origo in homage to Florentine 15th Century painting.

Continuing up the slope we find an informal garden with aromatic and Mediterranean plants where the geometric structure of the garden gradually drifts off into the woods. Near the woods is a little family graveyard where Iris' son, who died at the age of six, is buried."

Excerpt from "Gardens of Florence and Tuscany" by Mariachiara Pozzana