

Timeless Tuscany

Experience an idyllic
land in the middle
of Italy

by VIKKI MORAN



MEGAN MUMFORD

Vikki Moran (Vikki travel.journoport folio.com) is an award-winning travel writer residing in New Smyrna Beach, Florida.



Tuscany is an impossibly beautiful region of rolling hills, vineyard-strewn valleys and towns that feel frozen in time. At almost 8,880 square miles, it's the fifth-largest region in Italy with 10 provinces and one major city (Florence). Its food is simple yet extraordinary. Its wine—well, even a casual sipper will become a loyal fan. Here's a look.

Florence

Florence is layered in art, history and charm. Start with the iconic Florence Duomo, also known as the Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore, but don't miss the Opera del Duomo Museum just behind it. This gem houses original sculptures and artwork that once graced the cathedral.

Next, stroll across the Ponte Vecchio, where shops cling to a medieval bridge that spans the Arno River. Whether you're shopping or simply soaking in the view, it's an experience you won't want to miss.

When it's time for food, I suggest a Florentine steak, which is a thick-cut T-bone steak from Chianina cattle, traditionally grilled rare over a wood fire. It's a must-try for meat lovers, but ask for some sautéed spinach on top for the perfect touch. Non-carnivores might try Ribollita, a delicious rustic soup made from day-old bread, cannellini beans, black cabbage and vegetables.

Set aside ample time to visit the Uffizi Galleries, home to masterpieces by Botticelli, da Vinci and Caravaggio. It's vast and deserves at least a couple of hours.

On another day, experience the Galleria dell'Accademia di Firenze to see Michelangelo's David. Don't skip the Pitti Palace, commonly known as Boboli Gardens, a personal favorite for its fountains, sculptures and gardens.

At sunset, visit San Miniato al Monte, a serene, often-overlooked Romanesque church that offers one of the best views of Florence—and very few crowds.



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: ALEXUGALEK; EGROY; PBALLERO / STOCK.ADOBE.COM



Clockwise from left: Florence's panoramic landscape including the Ponte Vecchio and Florence Duomo; Buccellato di Lucca, a traditional sweet bread made in Lucca, Italy; a couple road-tripping in the Chianti region.

During an evening stroll, be on the lookout for Florence's Wine Windows. These tiny, arched openings are portals dating back to the 16th century and some are still serving today.

Greve in Chianti

Between Florence and Siena lies Greve, the heart of the Chianti Classico region and just under 19 miles from Florence. It's ideal for a day trip or a home base for wine country explorations. Tour nearby wineries, but also take time to relax with a coffee in Piazza Matteotti.

Wineries in Chianti are nothing short of amazing, both for their wines

and their views. Castello di Brolio near Gaiole in Chianti is one of Italy's oldest wineries with castle views and curated private tastings. Castello di Ama combines world-class wines with contemporary art installations. It is a feast for the eyes and the taste buds. Montefioralle Winery, near Greve, is a family-run gem with private tours.

Before leaving, make the short drive to Panzano. It's just over 4 miles. There, you can visit Dario Cecchini, the world-renowned butcher known for his theatrical energy and respect for traditional, ethical meat preparation. His shop is a celebration of Tuscan passion, and the visit alone is worth the detour.

Tuscany is the perfect place to lose yourself in the beauty of art, history and nature. Once you visit, you'll understand why Tuscany calls you back again and again. ■

COSTCO CONNECTION

Costco Travel offers trips to Tuscany and other regions in Europe, as well as cruises, vacation packages, rental cars and hotel-only options for destinations in the United States, Canada and around the world.

Learn more at [CostcoTravel.com](https://www.costco.com/travel) or call 1-877-849-2730.

Getting around

A car is the most flexible way to see the countryside. Roads are well-marked, but be prepared for narrow streets with little parking

in historic centers.

Tuscany's rail network connects major cities like Florence, Pisa, Lucca, Arezzo and Siena. It's affordable, scenic and stress-free.

Buses will generally reach

places the trains don't, like charming towns such as Greve and Cortona. They're reliable, but schedules can be limited on weekends, so plan ahead.—VM