



# RIDE WORLD WIDE

## Tuscany - Chianti Rides 2012

### Riding Trip Information Sheet

These rides explore the Chianti area of Tuscany, between Florence and Siena, a region that fulfils all expectations of typical Tuscan countryside with rolling hills, vineyards, olive groves, traditional country villas, impressive castles and hilltop towns. The rides are based from the comfortable farmhouse home, Rendola, of your English hosts, Jenny Bawtree and her son Nicholas. Jenny has lived in Tuscany for many years and is an experienced, enthusiastic and extremely knowledgeable guide. The rides are a good mix of riding and sightseeing and are an excellent introduction to rural Tuscany, with Jenny's years of experience as a guide ensuring you see several of the hidden delights of the region that tourists usually miss. For those who have more time to spend, the rides can easily be combined with a few extra days visiting Arezzo, Siena or Florence or a little further afield, Rome, San Gimignano, Montepulciano or Assisi.

**Dates** For 2012 two different 7 night ride itineraries and a 4 night long weekend itinerary are scheduled from set dates from late March to June and in September and October (see dates overleaf). Non-riders are welcome to join any Discover Tuscany or Taste of Tuscany programme and some weeks are specially designed for riders and non riders with both walking and riding guides available. Stays at Rendola can also sometimes be arranged on request for other dates during the season. These are generally for 7 nights but shorter stays are sometimes possible. Please contact Ride World Wide to discuss your requirements and possible dates.



**The Horses** There are about 20 horses at Rendola, mainly crosses of local Italian breeds such as Sicilian Maremmani, with several Arab crosses and a few pure Arabs. They are of a medium build and average between about 14.2hh and 16hh. They are all well schooled and a responsive, enjoyable ride and there is a good selection of horses for riders of all levels including several that are good mounts for confident children over 10 years. Tack is English style with suede 'seat savers' and saddlebags provided if required. There is a strict rider weight limit of 13st 10lbs / 87 kgs.

**Riding** The route and number of hours riding each day varies with the itinerary chosen, but there is generally between 2 ½ and 5 hours riding a day. The 'Discover Tuscany' and 'Taste of Tuscany' rides are fairly flexible and, as each night is spent at Rendola, the amount of riding can often be adjusted to suit. Jenny and her BHS qualified instructor Eraldo will also give basic lessons to less experienced riders if required, although any changes to the set programme and the availability of lessons will depend on their guiding commitments and also the requirements of the rest of the group. All the ride itineraries are fairly relaxed on the whole and include some days with only half the day riding and usually one full day of sightseeing. Where there are full day rides, these are broken up with a leisurely break for a picnic lunch. Rides are led by Jenny herself who is an experienced, careful guide and teacher and is also extremely knowledgeable about the local area, or by Michaela Günther or Eraldo both experienced guides who speak good English. There are grooms at Rendola who help look after the horses which are tacked up and prepared for you each day and, when moving accommodation, a vehicle usually meets you at lunchtime and transports luggage. A mobile telephone is carried for emergencies when riding. Rides are usually limited to a maximum of 10 guests although the maximum is normally 7 for the 'Castles Ride'.

**Pace** The pace of the rides is tailored to suit riders' ability. Overall it is moderate but it is also fairly gentle and relaxed. The aim of the rides is to enjoy the scenery of the area and to get to know some of the more off-the-beaten track parts of the Chianti in an unhurried way from the back of a good horse, rather than fast or challenging riding. The routes chosen take you from village to village across country, following dirt tracks through woods and skirting small fields and vineyards. There will be several opportunities to trot and canter each day, although usually in fairly short stretches as you are often on winding, undulating tracks around vineyards and small fields. There is some roadwork each day in the vicinity of local villages, but this is kept to a minimum. You will usually be encouraged to stay one behind the other when you ride, particularly when you are following narrow tracks and when trotting and cantering.



**Riding Experience** The rides are suitable for intermediate riders and above, with some novice riders accepted on rides based throughout at Rendola. The Castles Ride is geared towards reasonably competent intermediate riders who feel comfortable, balanced and secure in the saddle at a walk, trot and steady canter and are able to control a well-schooled horse outside at all these paces - but to join either programme you should have experience riding out of an arena in open country, over different terrain and in different environments as you will ride through small villages, farms, woods, fields and narrow river valleys. You also need to be reasonably riding fit as you will ride for several hours on most days. Hours are a little shorter and the itinerary is more flexible on the Discover Tuscany Ride so some novice riders are accepted on this programme. Jenny is an experienced and careful guide who enjoys riding with experienced riders but she also looks after the less confident very well.

**Non-riders** There is plenty to do and see in the area around Rendola for those who do not wish to ride and non-riding companions are welcome to join any Discover Tuscany or Taste of Tuscany date. Walking can be arranged during these programmes where there would be a guide to lead walks through the surrounding countryside, perhaps meeting up with riders for a picnic. Jenny is very knowledgeable about the area and will always be able to suggest places to see and ideas for outings and day trips. Train connections from Montevarchi are good but we recommend non-riders hire a car for added flexibility.

**Terrain** The rides explore the Chianti region, starting at the small hamlet of Rendola, which is about 5 kms from the town of Montevarchi, south east of Florence and north east of Siena. You will ride into the 'Chianti Classico' region to the southwest of Montevarchi following tracks around olive groves, vineyards and fields of crops, and riding along narrow paths that wind through wooded river valleys. Some routes climb up into the Chianti hills, which rise to a height of 2500 feet, and you will cross a few of the small rivers and streams that flow into the Arno valley. On most routes there is some roadwork in the vicinity of small villages and farms but this is kept to a minimum and is usually on quiet country roads and through picturesque old country villages.

**Accommodation** Accommodation is either at Rendola, a traditional Tuscan farmhouse in the hamlet of the same name, or, on some nights, in other similar farmhouses and local hotels. The house Rendola, which is Jenny's home, is a traditional two storey stone farmhouse. It is full of character, typical of the area, rustic and homely - very much a home rather than a hotel but relaxed and comfortable. On the ground floor is a large beamed dining room where meals are eaten at a long oak table. An outside stone staircase leads to the first floor sitting room where there is an open fireplace, sofa, chairs and a good selection of books. Off this, also on the first floor, are the guest bedrooms. These are of varying sizes, painted in fresh pastel colours with terracotta tiled floors and each has a small adjoining tiled bathroom with loo and shower. The house is at the top of a hill, a short walk from the hamlet of Rendola and is surrounded by olive groves with lovely views over the Arno valley. Behind it, a short distance away, is a large stable yard where the horses are kept. There is also a sand school tucked in amongst the olive groves and numerous animals including dogs, a goat, chickens and ducks wandering freely around the house and garden! The atmosphere is informal and relaxed - you will immediately feel at home. Accommodation on moving rides when not at Rendola, is at other similar farmhouses belonging to friends of your host (bathrooms may be shared in some of these) and at local hotels chosen as far as possible for their character. When staying in Siena your hotel is carefully chosen for its character and position for sightseeing, museum visits and shopping and is usually (availability allowing) either an 18th C villa with frescoes or an old coaching inn. Rates on all trips are based on twin rooms (see price details below for information about sharing / single rooms).



**Meals** You will be extremely well fed on these rides with three meals a day, all freshly produced by Jenny's cooks, Sergio, who was born and grew up in the area, or Franca, of Sicilian origin - both expert at many local dishes. Breakfast is simple in the Italian style - generally cereal or perhaps yoghurt, bread or toast and tea or coffee; lunch is either a three course picnic out riding - perhaps a rice and smoked salmon salad, salami and cheeses followed by a home made tart or bruschetta, barbecued pork, chicken and mini pizzas cooked on the fire, with ricciarelli or grape cake, a speciality of the area, to finish - or might be a rocket and parmesan salad, home made pasta dish and dessert eaten at Rendola. Dinner is also three courses - often a delicious risotto or home made pasta to start, then a main meat dish with vegetables followed by fresh fruit or cheese for pudding. Local table wine (usually red but white on request) and coffee are included with lunch and dinner, there are different Italian liqueurs to try and squash is freely available. If you wish to try some of the area's other wines, Jenny will be happy to supply these for you to buy at cost and the guest fridge is also kept supplied with beer and a selection of soft drinks to buy at cost.

**Weather** The best time to visit this part of Tuscany to ride is between April and June and in September and October. In spring there are many wild flowers including numerous orchids and fields of poppies and the acacia and fruit trees are in blossom. In autumn the area is drier and less green, but full of golden colour with the spectacular changing leaves. Daytime temperatures in May and June are generally about 23 to 28 degrees C and very pleasant for riding. July and August can be very hot so rides are generally not run at this time. September and October are cooler and are generally good months to visit. It can rain all year but rain (usually showers or short sharp thunderstorms) is most likely over the winter from November to March.

**What to bring** We will send you a list of things we suggest you bring when you make your booking.

**Itineraries** The 'Castles Ride' includes a couple of days at Rendola and then a circular ride through the surrounding countryside to Siena. The 'Discover Tuscany' and 'Taste of Tuscany' rides are based at Rendola with riding out most days and nights at the farmhouse. Day by day arrangements on the latter two will vary according to the time of year, weather and also the number and experience of riders in the group but examples of all the itineraries offered are set out below (please note that these are only examples and arrangements may be varied by your guide at their discretion if the weather or other local conditions require).

### **The Castles Ride - Example itinerary**

**Day 1** Arrive in Florence and meet your host Jenny or her son Nicholas at the main bar in Florence train station (Firenze Santa Maria Novella) at 17.45. A forty-minute train journey to Montevarchi where you are met and driven about ten minutes by minivan to Rendola, the 400-year-old typically Tuscan farmhouse home of your hosts. Settle in and enjoy a glass of Chianti Classico in the garden or sitting room before dinner. Night at Rendola (D).

**Day 2** After breakfast meet the horses in the stables behind the house. Set off on a ride of about 2 ½ hours through the olive groves, vineyards and woodlands of the Arno valley, passing pretty farmhouses and medieval villages. After lunch a short siesta (most welcome!), and then some local sightseeing with Jenny, who is a very knowledgeable guide. First a short drive to the medieval village of Loro Ciuffenna, built round a ravine. Enjoy some Italian ice cream and then drive to a Romanesque church nearby with an 8th century pulpit and animal carvings. For supper a choice of genuine Italian pizzas cooked in a wood oven. Night at Rendola. (B,L,D).

**Day 3** After breakfast a ride of about 2 ½ hours on the eastern slopes of the Chianti mountains with panoramic views. Lunch at Rendola then a trip by van to the Abbey of Coltibuono and a guided tour of the cellars and gardens, followed by a chance to sample and buy Chianti wine and local ceramics in the estate shop. Dinner and night at Rendola. (B,L,D).

**Day 4** Ride southwards, passing the tower of Galatrona, a lake and the ruined castle of Cennina. After a picnic lunch in the woods above the village of Montebenichi, ride past its two castles, and then on to a riding-centre owned by a friend of your hosts, situated near the Castle of Montalto. The ride lasts nearly five hours. Dinner and night either there or back at Rendola. (B,L,D).

**Day 5** Today you ride for about 3 ½ hours, first through the vast estate of Villa Arceno with its cypress avenues, extensive views and frequent opportunities to canter, and then over the Chianti hills, following an ancient Etruscan way until you enter the area where Chianti Classico wine is made. The horses are stabled at Podernovo, a charming farmhouse with Siena visible on the horizon, and there you will have a picnic lunch. After lunch a visit by minivan van to the gardens and chapel of the castle of Brolio, which has belonged to the Ricasoli barons since the 12th century. The most illustrious member of the family was Bettino Ricasoli, statesman, agriculturist and inventor of the traditional formula for the Chianti Classico wine. You are then driven to Siena to spend the night at a central hotel, ideally placed for museums and shopping. Own arrangements for dinner. (B,L).



**Day 6** Today you are free to explore the city of Siena, with its wonderful architecture, art treasures and great shopping. Don't forget to visit the cathedral in black and white marble and to stroll round the Piazza del Campo, where the famous Palio race is held twice a year. Your own arrangements for lunch and dinner. Night at the same hotel. (B).

**Day 7** Driven back to Podernovo to meet the horses. Ride through the vast estate of Brolio, passing the house where Bertolucci's "Stealing Beauty" was filmed. After passing the brooding castle, follow a stream through shady woods and pass the village of San Martino with its herd of long-horned Maremmano cattle. A barbecue lunch on the ridge above the castle and village of Montegonzi and then descend to Rendola for your farewell dinner (about 5 ½ hours riding). Final night at Rendola. (B,L,D).

**Day 8** Breakfast, then a 10 minute drive to Montevarchi to meet the train back to Florence. Own arrangements for your onward journey from Florence. (If you prefer you can make your own arrangements to take the train from Montevarchi to another destination such as Assisi, Perugia, Arezzo, Orvieto or there is a direct train to Rome from Montevarchi which takes 3 hours.) (B).

### Discover Tuscany Ride - Example itinerary

**Day 1** Arrive in Florence and meet your host Jenny or her son Nicholas at the main bar in Florence train station (Firenze Santa Maria Novella) at 17.45. A forty-minute train journey to Montevarchi where you are met and driven about ten minutes by minivan to Rendola, the 400-year-old typically Tuscan farmhouse home of your hosts. Settle in and enjoy a glass of Chianti Classico in the garden or sitting room before dinner. Night at Rendola. (D).

**Day 2** Breakfast and morning ride (approximately 2 ½ hours) through vineyards, olive-groves and woodland, passing close to a 11th century tower and a 14th century church. Return to Rendola for lunch at about 1pm. Over coffee, an informal talk on the Tuscan farmhouse and agriculture in Tuscany. After a short siesta you can join in Jenny's light-hearted introduction to the Italian language, or have a look through her extensive library of books on all aspects of Italy. For dinner a choice of genuine Italian pizzas cooked in a wood oven. Night at Rendola. (B,L,D).



**Day 3** Breakfast and morning ride (approximately 2 ½ hours) in the wooded hills north of Rendola, scattered with traditional farmhouses. After lunch a trip to the ancient city of Arezzo and a guided visit to the unusual and fascinating frescoes of Piero della Francesca and to the main square made famous by the film "Life is Beautiful". A chance, too, to do some shopping before returning to Rendola for dinner and night. (B,L,D).

**Day 4** Day ride with picnic in the Chianti hills (about 4 hours riding) south of the stables, passing the medieval village of San Leolino, a lake and the castles of Cennina and Lupinari. On your return an opportunity to help to prepare a buffet supper using local herbs and vegetables and fruit of the season. Night at Rendola. (B,L,D).

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**Day 5** A free day to make your own arrangements for sightseeing, perhaps to visit Florence, Assisi or Orvieto - your choice! All are an easy train ride from Montevarchi and you will be driven to and from Montevarchi station. For those who prefer to walk, maps of local routes will be provided and if you wish a picnic lunch (small extra charge). Dinner and night at Rendola. (B,D)

**Day 6** A morning visit with your guide to Montevarchi and its famous weekly market. Lunch at a gourmet but typical Tuscan trattoria in Loro Ciuffenna, a medieval village built around a ravine on the other side of the Arno valley, then an afternoon ride of about 2 hours or a lesson in the school. Dinner and night at Rendola. (B,L,D).

**Day 7** A final day ride (about 4 ½ hours), to the top of the Chianti hills (nearly 2,500 feet) behind Rendola. A barbecue on the ridge and ride back to Rendola via a village with a castle, Montegonzi. If the weather is uncertain an alternative ride in the valley and a barbecue in a park created by a local sculptor, Carmelo Librizzi. Ride back to Rendola in the afternoon. Dinner and final night at Rendola. (B,L,D).

**Day 8** Breakfast and then a ten-minute drive to Montevarchi to meet the train back to Florence. Own arrangements for your onward journey from Florence. (If you prefer you can make your own arrangements to take the train from Montevarchi to another destination such as Assisi, Perugia, Arezzo, Orvieto or Rome). (B).



### **A Taste of Tuscany Ride - Example itinerary**

**Day 1** Arrive in Florence and meet your host Jenny or her son Nicholas at the main bar in Florence train station (Firenze Santa Maria Novella) at 17.45. A forty-minute train journey to Montevarchi where you are met and driven about ten minutes by minivan to Rendola, the 400-year-old typically Tuscan farmhouse home of your hosts. Settle in and enjoy a glass of Chianti Classico with them in the garden or sitting room before dinner. Night at Rendola. (D).

**Day 2** The morning ride is through the vineyards, olive groves and woodland of the unspoilt Tuscan countryside returning to Rendola for lunch. In the afternoon a visit to the tower of Galatrona from the top of which there are wonderful views of the Arno valley and the 14th century church of the same name. Walk down to the village of Mercatale for a welcome cup of coffee or tea in one of the bars before returning to Rendola for dinner and the night. (B,L,D)

**Day 3** Breakfast and set off riding through a couple of charming hamlets and past the abandoned church of San Tomme. After lunch at Rendola either drive to the station for a short train trip to the ancient city of Arezzo and a guided visit of some of its most notable sights, or a trip to Cortona. Return to Rendola for dinner and the night. (B,L,D)

**Day 4** A full day ride to the top of the Chianti hills with fantastic views over the Chianti Classico region. After a delicious barbecue with an opportunity to do some olive oil tasting, ride past the medieval castle and village of Montegonzi back to Rendola for a very special dinner and overnight. (B,L,D)

**Day 5** After breakfast, transfer to Montevarchi station for your onward travel. (B)

**DATES 2012:****Castles Ride:**

21st to 28th April  
5th to 12th May  
19th to 26th May

22nd to 29th September  
6th to 13th October

**Discover Tuscany Ride:**

7th to 14th April  
14th to 21st April  
12th to 19th May  
26th May to 2nd June

15th to 22nd September  
29th September to 6th October  
13th to 20th October

**Taste of Tuscany Ride:**

31st March to 4th April  
28th April to 2nd May  
2nd to 6th June

20th to 24th October

**RATES 2012**

**Please note that due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, ride rates are now quoted in euros. The sterling price will be the equivalent sterling rate using the euro/sterling exchange rate in force when you book/pay.**

**The Castles Ride** - Euros 1725 per person

**Discover Tuscany Ride** - Euros 1410 per person

**A Taste of Tuscany Ride** - Euros 875 per person

**Children** 12 to 18 yr old - Discover Tuscany Ride - Euros 1270 per person / Taste of Tuscany - Euros 790 per person

**Non-Riders** - Discover Tuscany - Euros 1130 per person / Taste of Tuscany - Euros 700 per person

The Rate for the '**Castles Ride**' **INCLUDES** 7 nights twin accommodation, all riding, guiding and equipment, meals from dinner Day 1 to breakfast Day 8 (except dinner in Siena on Day 5 and lunch and dinner in Siena on Day 6), house wine with meals, except in Siena, and return transfers from / to Florence on Days 1 / 8 at set times with the group by train and minivan.

The rate **EXCLUDES** international flights / travel to Florence, dinner on Day 5 and lunch and dinner on Day 6 in Siena, wine when in Siena, 'premium' wines and extra drinks throughout, personal medical / travel insurance (which all riders must have), supplements for a single room, any visa fees and any tips you may wish to leave.

The Rate for the '**Discover Tuscany Ride**' **INCLUDES** 7 nights twin accommodation at Rendola, riding as indicated (three morning or afternoon rides of 2 to 2 ½ hours and two longer day rides), breakfast and dinner each day, lunch on five days (usually three lunches at Rendola and two picnics), house wine with lunch and dinner and also return transfers from / to Florence on Days 1 / 8 at set times with the group by train and minivan. The rate **EXCLUDES** international flights / travel to Florence, lunch on one day, extra drinks / premium wines throughout, any extra sightseeing / excursions / transfers etc., personal medical / travel insurance (which you must have), supplements for a single room, any visa fees and any tips you wish to leave.

The Rate for the '**Taste of Tuscany Ride**' **INCLUDES** 4 nights twin accommodation at Rendola, riding as indicated (two morning rides of 2 to 2 ½ hours and one longer day ride), sightseeing on 2 afternoons, meals from dinner on day 1 to breakfast on day 5, house wine with lunch and dinner and also return transfers from / to Florence on Days 1 / 5 at set times with the group by train and minivan. The rate **EXCLUDES** international flights / travel to Florence, extra drinks / premium wines throughout, any extra sightseeing / excursions / transfers etc., personal medical / travel insurance (which you must have), supplements for a single room, any visa fees and any tips you wish to leave.

**Single travellers** Please note that rates quoted above assume shared twin accommodation.

**If you are travelling alone and would like a single room** we will do our best to arrange one for you on payment of a single supplement, although room availability will depend on when you book and also on the number and mix of guests in the group and **cannot** be guaranteed. Hotel rooms in Siena have to be reserved a long way in advance and additional single rooms may not be available at the time of booking. Also the availability of single rooms at Rendola depends on the number / mix in the group. Any available singles will be allocated on a first come, first served basis. The supplement to book a single room (if available) is Euros 150 for the week on the Discover Tuscany Ride, Euros 100 for the 4 nights on Taste of Tuscany and Euros 250 for the week on the Castles Ride.

**If you are travelling alone and are happy to share a room with another guest**, please tell us - we will do our best to find a sharer for you so that no supplement is payable. However, on the Castle Ride, if there is no-one to share with you, a supplement will be charged for the nights in Siena.

**Travel** The meeting point for the ride is Florence train station, which is about 15 minutes by taxi from Florence airport. There are direct flights to Florence from London, Gatwick, daily with an airline called 'Meridiana' (Tel: 0871 423 3711 or book through their website [www.meridiana.com](http://www.meridiana.com)). Alternatively you can fly to Pisa or Bologna and take a train to Florence. British Airways, Alitalia, Ryan Air, Easyjet and some other 'budget' airlines have direct flights to Pisa and / or Bologna from London and/or regional airports - there is a train station at Pisa Airport and it is about 1 ½ hours by train to Florence; Bologna is about an hour on a fast train, plus ½ an hour to transfer from the airport to train station in Bologna. If you require help booking flights or a quote please call us, or you can often get good deals with the 'budget' airlines booking on-line. For further information on trains and train times we suggest you look at the Rail Europe website [www.raileurope.co.uk](http://www.raileurope.co.uk) or the Italian rail website - [www.trenitalia.com](http://www.trenitalia.com) There is also a coach service from Pisa airport to Florence station but this is only for people who travel on certain airlines.

**General visa and health information** (NB this is a brief outline - further information will be sent to you if you make a confirmed booking.)

**Visas** If you hold a full British passport you do not need a visa for visits to Italy.

**Health** No vaccinations are required by EEC residents to enter Italy. If you have a particular condition requiring special medical treatment, in case of emergencies you should carry a letter from your own doctor translated into Italian describing your condition and the medicine / treatment required. Chemists in Italy ('farmacia') will be qualified to give advice on minor ailments and to dispense prescriptions.

(Updated 08/09/11)

