

Springtime in Tuscany

An Herbal Journey

Tentative Itinerary, subject to change

May 25 ~ June 5, 2024

Saturday, May 25th Rendezvous in Firenze (Florence)

1:30 pm Arrival at Villa Certano & Lunch Located just minutes from Siena, this 500 year-old villa is owned by the Baldassarrini family. Get settled into your room. Lunch will be served in the “Parlor”.

3 Rest Time

4 Opening Circle & Introductions

6 Italian Feast at the villa. After dinner Annalisa Baldassarrini will present an informal talk on Siena and Villa Certano.

Sunday, May 26th

*** Morning tea and Coffee will be available**

7:30 Join Natalie for an hour of stretching, Pilates & yoga.

8 Breakfast at the Villa.

9:30 Hike the Tuscan countryside. This morning’s walk will depart from the villa and wind through the beautiful Tuscan countryside to a beautiful old chapel. We’ll plan our hike in time to arrive for the noon mass and experience the angelic singing in the chapel. Along the route we will explore the many familiar and unfamiliar plants of Tuscany.

1 Lunch at the villa There will be an Italian speaking table for those wishing to converse with Annalisa.

2 Tour Villa Certano. Join Annalisa for a tour of the 100-acre 400 year-old Villa Certano. This ancient setting has 20 acres of olive trees, 20 acres of grape vineyards, a 1200 year-old church nestled between the villa & the winery, a formal rose garden and much more.

4 Edible and Medicinal Herbs of Tuscany Join Penny for a walk around the villa discovering Italy’s rich herbal heritage.

7 Dinner at Costafabbri. We will be dining together in one of Tuscany's traditional eateries.

Monday, May 27th

*** Morning tea and Coffee will be available**

7:30 Join Natalie for an hour of stretching, Pilates & yoga.

8 Breakfast at the Villa.

9:30 Guided Herb walk with Zora Keller. A countryside walk discovering Italy's rich herbal heritage with Penny and local Tuscan herbalist Zora Keller. Zora is an Italian herbal specialist who has learned all about edible Tuscan plants/herbs from her parents/grandparents and many Tuscan elders.

12:30 Lunch at the Villa

1:30 Depart for Guided Tour of Lavanda del Chianti *Lavanda Del Chianti in Casalvento is a paradise of essences and perfumes. Presently under the direction of Lorenzo Domini, a doctor by profession, who, together with his wife Donata and his son Alessandro operate this Essential Oil business. The estate was acquired in 1950 by his father Giovanni, university professor and rector in Siena and in 1962 began the adventure with the cultivation of lavender, helichrysum, roses, iris and many other medicinal plants and with the purchase of the first distiller began extracting essential oils and hydrolates. In Casalvento, they cultivate nine different types of lavender, thyme, rosemary, sage, elicriso, hyssop, broom, Damascus rose, and iris. Dr. Domini will guide us through the fields of medicinal plants, and into the distillery. A typical Tuscan lunch will be served.*

7 Dine out Together in the Heart of Chianti

Tuesday, May 28th

*** Morning tea and Coffee will be available**

7:30 Yoga Join Natalie for an hour of stretching, Pilates, and yoga.

8:30 Breakfast

10 Free Morning

12:30 Lunch at the Villa

2:30 Visit to San Giovanni Terme at Rapolano. Tuscany has a rich tradition of taking the waters. We will be visiting a hot-springs resort where we will be soaking in the healing mineral waters. The spa has a wide assortment of hydrotherapy modalities. For those who wish, optional treatments of massage , beauty treatments and hydrotherapy will be available. You must sign up ahead for spa treatments. The precious spring waters which bubble up from the ground at San Giovanni have notable therapeutic properties, recognized by the Italian Ministry of Health. They are particularly effective in dealing with complaints relating to articulation of the joints, the respiratory system, dermatological ailments, and muscular problems.

7:30 Dinner We will dine together at the lovely restaurant L'Olivio at the San Giovanni Terme.

Wednesday, May 29th

* Morning tea and Coffee will be available

7 Yoga Join Natalie for an hour of stretching, Pilates and yoga.

7:30 ~ 8:30 Breakfast

9 Siena Market. Enjoy a morning in this bustling local market. Free time at the market to shop as you like!!

12 Lunch on your own in Siena

2 Guided tour of Siena's most treasured sites. Siena is a Gothic walled city with the same number of people today as 700 years ago. Its red brick lanes cascade everywhere. It was the first European city to eliminate autos from its main piazza (square). Sitting atop a hill, the IL Campo, is Siena's great central piazza. Its gently tilted cobblestone floor provides the perfect invitation to sit and people watch. Siena's Duomo (cathedral) is as Baroque as Gothic gets. The heads of 172 Popes peer down from the ceiling over the fine inlaid art on the floor. Wandering the streets and "loitering" in the square is magical. Grom's at Piazza Salimbeni has delicious organic gelato.

4:30 A visit to the Orto Botanico of Siena. Siena's Botanical Gardens "Orto Botanico" has over 3000 species and is contained within the walls of Siena. At Siena's university we will tour the gardens and museum. Dr. Claudia Perini, curator of the garden will guide us through this garden.

7 Dinner We will be dining together at one of Siena's traditional

ristorantes.

Thursday, May 30th

7 Early Breakfast

8 Depart for Day Excursion to Florence.

10 Guided Tour of Simplers Botanical Gardens. IL Giardino dei Semplici was started in the 1500's. At that time it was the teaching garden for the medical students. Today it serves as an education and research facility as well as a repository of rare and endangered plants and trees. The Director Dr. Paolo Luzzi will share his passion for the healing plants of Tuscany with us.

12:30 Lunch We will have lunch together at a local trattoria

2:30 Tour the Pharmacy of Santa Maria Novella Adjacent to the Piazza Di Santa Maria Novella is one of the world's oldest pharmacies established by the Dominican fathers in 1221. Since that time the Pharmacy of Santa Maria Novella has been producing perfumes, potions, powders and pomades. The structure, energy and art has not changed in the intervening centuries except for the installation of a modern cash register.

4 Free time to shop, experience Florence and have dinner on your own: Visit the famous outdoor markets of Firenze. Wander the streets, sample the gelato, rub the bronze pig's snout fountain for good luck, and stand on the Ponte Vecchio, Firenze's most famous bridge. Discover a small eatery on your own or with a friend or join members of our group to dine together at any of Florence's fabulous restaurants.

9:30 Travel Back to Villa Certano.

Friday, May 31

* Morning tea and Coffee will be available

8 Yoga Join Natalie for an hour of stretching, Pilates & yoga

8:30 Breakfast

10 Spa morning at Villa Certano with Penny Join Penny and Natalie for a delightful morning making herbal products, experiencing herbal facials, and exchanging hand and foot massage.

1 Lunch at the Villa-- There will be an Italian speaking table for those

wishing to converse with Annalisa

3 Pack up and Free time

7 Group Prepared Dinner at the Villa and time to enjoy our last night at the Villa. Join Annalisa Baldasarrini in preparing typical Sienese food for our grand feast. Penny invites those interested to help pick wild herbs for dinner.

Saturday, June 1st

6:30 Early Breakfast Today we will depart Villa Certano and head off on our next adventures. Be sure to have all your belongings packed and ready to go. Remember to hand in your apartment key.

7:30 Depart for Sansepolcro and Aboca

9:30 Guided Tour of Aboca Herbal Museum, Gardens, Herbal Laboratory and Production Facility. Aboca Herbal Museum is a great cultural project housed in the magnificent 18th Palazzo Bourbon Del Monte in the quaint town of San Sepolcro. Its mission is to recover and spread the traditional use of medicinal herbs. Displays and exhibits showcase the history of the relationship between people and medicinal plants on the theological, philosophical, mythological, magical and literary levels. The botanical library, Bibliotheca Antiquais a remarkable collection of valuable ancient books dealing specifically with the subject of the use of medicinal plants over the ages. There are separate rooms of exquisite displays dedicated to History, Pottery, Weighing Scales, Glassware, Herbs, an Apothecary Shop, a Phytochemical Laboratory, Poison Cellar and a 19th century Pharmacy. We will also be guided through Aboca's extensive medicinal herb gardens and unique herbal specimen gardens.

4:30 Check into Domus Laetitia Monastery. The "Domus Laetitia" of Assisi is a religious house of hospitality. It is located a few steps from the fourteenth-century walls of the city, just 10 minutes walk to the Basilica of Santa Chiara and a 20-minute walk to the Papal Basilica of San Francesco.

5:30 Explore Assisi and Dine On Your Own Around 1200 a simple friar from Assisi challenged the decadence of the church with the powerful message of non-materialism, simplicity, and to 'slow down and smell the flowers. Francis' message of love and sensitivity to the environment has a broad and timeless appeal. The Basilica of St. Francis, the centerpiece of the "Hill of Paradise", is one of the artistic highlights of medieval Europe.

Sunday, June 2nd

8 Breakfast at the Hotel

9 Silent Pilgrimage to St. Francis of Assisi's Mountain Retreat We will visit the Grotto and original Chapel of St. Francis. As pilgrims, we will travel up into the hills of Assisi, experience a silent pilgrimage, and walk to the caves in which St. Francis meditated. Be prepared to experience the profound and sacred. This hilltop chapel with its live oaks is the true (rather than another) shrine to St. Francis.

12 Lunch on your own in Assisi

2-5 Guided Tour of the Medieval Gardens of Perugia This most important hill city of Umbria has 3,000 years of history concentrated in an area that is truly on a human scale. We will be given a guided visit of the Medieval Gardens. This is a very special garden that mingles art, astrology, and history, with plants that narrate myths, legends and sacred stories. Today is a public holiday in many Italian cities in celebration of La Festa di San Giovanni or St. John's Day. We begin with the Umbrian tradition of the blessing of the dew. We will gather sometime today to share a traditional anointing blessing with St. John's wort oil we prepared at Villa Certano.

7:30 Dinner together in Assisi

Monday, June 3rd

7 Early morning breakfast We will be departing Assisi and need to be sure we are packed and ready to go.

7:30 Depart Assisi and travel to Camaldoli for a full day of hiking through ancient beech wood, oak and fir forests. This is one of the highlights for many of us on previous trips. Camaldoli, one of the great monastic centers of the forest, is tiny and set in densely wooded mountains. The austere hermitage houses monks who live under the vow of silence. The monastery contains a 16th century ancient pharmacy where the monks prepare and sell herbal preparations. The walk starts through ancient beech and fir woods. It then ambles through high mountain meadows and mixed woods. It offers one of the most panoramic views of Tuscany. We'll spend the day hiking, ending up at the Granduca Lodge in Campigna for dinner. For those who don't wish to hike, the bus will take you to the Granduca for a relaxing day at

this beautiful mountain lodge set deep in the forest (short day hikes, jacuzzi and spa facilities available at the Granduca).

7:30 Dinner Together at the Granduca Lodge.

Tuesday, June 4th

7:30 Yoga After hiking our muscles are so ready for a good stretch

8 Breakfast in the lodge.

9 Relax, sleep in, enjoy the peace and quiet of this mountain lodge.

Optional morning activity; Penelope will be offering a class on Traveler's First Aide from 10:30 until 12 noon. *Bring your first aide kits with you

1 Lunch together at the Granduca.

2 4 Botanical Keying Join us as we play our Botanical Keying Game. Not to be missed, a highlight of every journey.

4 Free Time to Pack, take a short hike, write those last postcards and/or just relax.

5:30 Closing Circle An opportunity to reflect on our time in Italy 'living the good life' and our journey together, highlights, blessings, and lessons. Let's rejoice and create a ceremony and honor this magical time we have shared.

7:30 Final Dinner Celebration

Wednesday, June 5th

Be sure to pack all of your luggage and have your suitcases in the lobby before you come down for breakfast. Don't forget to hand in your room key.

7:30 Breakfast

9 Depart the Granduca for Florence Airport

12 noon Arrive Florence Airport

"Birthplace of the Renaissance, the region gets its name from the Etruscans, the most powerful civilization of pre-Roman Italy. Its walled cities, cypress lined roads, and patchwork hills have been written about and photographed with such unrivaled enthusiasm that the image of the place seems to have insinuated itself in the public consciousness, even in the minds of those who have yet to set foot on its fertile soil. A cynic might expect the 'real' Tuscany to disappoint, for how could it ever live up to all

the attention it received? And yet whenever I come home to the Tuscany ~ even after the shortest absence ~ its startling beauty, its richness and abundance strike me with a freshness that belies the many years I have spent here” ~ Lori de Mori

Lodging information:

Villa Certano: 53010 Costalpino Siena Phone: +39 0577 349108

Domus Laetitia Monastery Viale Giovanni XXIII n.2 06081 Assisi Phone +39 075812792

Granduca Hotel: Via Spinello Centro 3, 47018 Campigna Phone +39 0543 980051

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Richard's Cell: TBD

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