

# Our Favorite Memories

## Tuscany, Italy

By Tour Leader Joan Kreeger

*The sound of church bells*, the savory smell of garlic and bread, the ruby color of Chianti and the lush green softness of the valleys are just some of our memories of the beautiful Tuscany region of Italy. In Siena, we enjoyed walking the narrow stone streets and learning about the age old culture, art and architecture. Our adventure took us to Giulietta's home where we learned how to roll out and prepare ravioli with just that special touch. We peeled and prepared vegetables and finished our masterpiece lunch with tiramisu. It was incredibly delicious and we all learned some secrets and tips of Italian cooking.

Did I mention the wine? Throughout the entire trip, we tasted wine, we learned about wine and we saw the vineyards everywhere. We also saw the olive groves and learned how the oil is obtained and tasted the wonderful results.

San Gimignano, the city of "beautiful towers" welcomed us one day. We were surrounded by the peacefulness of the monastery of Sant'Antimo during a visit there the following day. We dipped our feet in the warm spring waters at the tiny town of Bagno Vignoni, boasting an unusual large pool of water as its main square. The towns of Impruneta, Panzano, Pienza, and Castellina welcomed us with food, drink and shopping. And everywhere we were reminded of the Renaissance era by touring the cathedrals, the gardens, the museums, and the town halls filled with paintings and sculptures. Just when we thought it couldn't get any better, we feasted in the main dining room of the medieval Meleto Castle.

Our last stop, Florence, amazed us with the Pitti Palace art museum, Santa Croce square, the Ponte Vecchio bridge and the shops and markets galore. The highlight of our last day was viewing the Renaissance masterpiece by Michelangelo, his beautiful statue of David, which has a position of honor in the rotunda of the Galleria dell'Accademia. It was certainly an experience to remember and savor with new found friends. ❖

*"But if you come, I shall pour for you Chianti similar to ruby that kisses you and bites you and makes you shed sweet tears."*

- Fulvio Testi, 1593-1646



Exploring the town of Pienza.



Enjoying Chianti.

*More photos from Tuscany, Italy*



The monastery of Sant 'Antimo—today one of the most serene places on earth.



Soaking in the warm spring waters of Bagno Vignoni.



Learning to make ravioli



Photo op San Gimignano.



Scene in Pienza



In a Tuscany vineyard.