

Testimonial email from Judie Drexler - Springtime in Tuscany April 9-16, 2011 Tour

Springtime in Tuscany is one thing, but springtime in Tuscany with Giovanna is something else. My concern about group tours has always been the thought of being part of a 40 member group that would be led about like cattle by bored and ununderstandable guides. This doesn't happen with Giovanna because she studies the areas to be seen, finds the best guides and constructs the most interesting itineraries.

On our tour, the hotels were "no frills", but lovely, old buildings with definite old world charm; our guides were incredibly well versed in everything tuscan, and their English was every bit as good as ours. Giovanna knows them well, and one or the other was always with us. Our preplanned visits were spectacular: the two wineries, where tasting the grape and good tuscan food was delightful; the olive oil press fascinating. Shipping of products was simplified, reasonable and reliable. Our cooking lesson was great fun, with Sonia and Nando, who showed us how to prepare a fabulous Italian meal..we were sent off with all of the recipes to be reproduced at home. Other aspects of life in Siena: the piazza which turns into a racecourse in July, but is full of life all the rest of the time, the history and customs related to the Palio, the beautiful views of the city, the good shopping and excellent restaurants..all there with Giovanna, and friends.

Giovanna believes in equal measures of touring and free time. Touring various landmarks is a must, and with only 11 of us was a pleasure in our small van. It's lovely not have to go on prescheduled visits to out of the way stores in which you have no interest (a real nuisance in big groups from cruises), and therefore no kickbacks to drivers and guides. With Giovanna, we met her friend Ninfa, an authority on where to find a hairdresser, ceramics or anything else one's heart desires; she's also a superb hostess and cook.

We were lucky in that we all felt like old friends in a very short time; pictures are still being shared, and a reunion is right around the corner. We were lucky to have Franca Riccardi, friend of Giovanna and director of the America-Italy Society of Philadelphia with us; her help was invaluable in finding books and other good things

We've requested a trip to Sicily; Giovanna is working on it.

Judie Drexler