

## About Siena

Siena is a beautiful city in the heart of Tuscany, not far from Florence, and is well-known for having perfectly preserved its medieval buildings and Gothic architecture. The city, which spreads out over three small hills, is divided into three areas called "Terzi":

- Terzo di Citta; where the cathedral and civic museum *Santa Maria della Scala* are located.
- Terzo di Camollia; known as the high street shopping area and where the fortress is located.
- Terzo di San Martino; which includes Piazza del Campo and the Palazzo Pubblico (Siena City Hall).

For a more detailed, but brief description of the city see <http://www.niklas.com/italy/cities/siena.htm> and <http://www.siena-info.net/>. Some major landmarks to see in Siena are:

- Piazza del Campo, Siena's shell-shaped main square, which is the symbol of the city.
- Torre del Mangia, a 88-meter-high tower, which offers a splendid view of the whole city.
- The Cathedral and the Baptistery.
- The Town Hall, the political centre of the city since 1300, which now houses the civic museum, where the beautiful frescos of "the good and bad government" are displayed.

For further information on Siena's many other monuments and museums see <http://www.10things.it/guide/siena/top-10/>

The surroundings of Siena also constitute a splendid attraction. The traditional division of the entire area includes four principal geographic zones.

- The Chianti landscape between Florence and Siena, which is famous worldwide for its vineyards and high quality wine.
- The Crete, south-east of Siena, which offers a unique landscape, with its rock formations, soft hills and grain fields stretching away below a medieval fortress.
- The wooded and hilly Val d'Elsa to the west.
- And last, but not least, the Val d'Orcia, the typical countryside of Siena, to the south just beyond the Crete area.

More information on things to see and do in each area can be found at <http://www.sienaturismo.it>.

## SIENA

A crucial role in the culture and history of Siena is played by the 17 contrade or zones which the city is divided into. The most important event that the contrade are involved in is a fierce competition called the Palio. The Palio consists of a unique horserace which takes place in Piazza del Campo. For more information see <http://www.ilpalio.org/palioenglish.htm>.

For general information please visit Siena's official tourist office: <http://www.terresiena.it>.

All the museums are included as well as activities and amusements. Another list of museums can be found at: <http://www.museisenesi.org/index.php?id=167&L=3>.

The official website of the Comune di Siena offers an updated list of events such as concerts, exhibitions and so on. Please check: <http://www.comune.siena.it/ilturista/?lan=ENG>.

## **FOOD AND WINE**

Food is definitely something that needs to be experienced to truly get in touch with a culture. Piazza del Campo, for instance, is a great place to sit, but it is usually better to simply have something to drink there and then move somewhere a bit less scenic in order to eat good food.

For some advice about restaurants please check: <http://www.gamberorosso.it/en> or <http://www.slowfood.com>.

A nice place for wine tasting is the Enoteca Italiana, situated inside the Fortress' ancient walls. For further information see [http://www.enotecaitaliana.it/w2d3/v3/view/enoteca/enosito2/pubblica/esc\\_en.html](http://www.enotecaitaliana.it/w2d3/v3/view/enoteca/enosito2/pubblica/esc_en.html).

The most famous pastry shop in Siena is Nannini; the family is also known because of the singer Gianna Nannini. Further details at <http://www.guidonannini.it/eng>. Other pastry shops in Siena such as 'Pasticceria Nocino', 'Peccato di Gola', 'forno Le Campane' and 'Pasticceria Bini' should be visited (they are easy to find on Google Map). The quality of their cakes is remarkable.

An extra stop for food shopping in Siena should be done at 'Antica Drogheria Manganeli'. Quality products can also be found at the Abbey of Monteoliveto. This is quite a magical place where Gregorian chants can be listened to (every Sunday at 11.00AM or at 6.30PM) and where it is possible to buy products grown by the monks living there. Further details at <http://www.agricolamonteoliveto.com/ING/index.html>.

## **HOT SPRINGS**

Apart from being known for its wine and the olive oil, the area around Siena is also known for hot springs. Rapolano Terme is the closest village to Siena where one can luxuriate in these naturally warm waters. The thermal structures there also offer beauty treatments and massages. Further information available

at <http://www.termesangiovanni.it/index.php?lng=en> and <http://www.termeq.it>.

Another good spot for hot springs is Bagno Vignoni, a lovely village that offers not only hot-springs but also the opportunity to have some good wine as well as good Tuscan specialties (pecorino cheese, goat cheese, cold cuts and so on). Further information at <http://www.termebagnovignoni.it/storia.html>.

## **SIGHTSEEING**

One of the most enchanting ways of experiencing the landscape of the area surrounding Siena is by touring the region's sights by car. This allows an in-depth and personal taste of all that this beautiful countryside has to offer. The tours listed below offer a chance to get away from the larger tourist attractions and sample the delicacies of local cheeses and wines against the backdrop of the rolling Tuscan hills.

There are three main areas in the immediate vicinity of Siena. A tour around each area is listed below and includes the names of the principal villages to visit, a brief description of the scenery, and some of the many activities on offer are listed below. (To avoid repetition,

museums are not listed; see <http://www.museisenesi.org/index.php?id=167&L=3>, and enter the desired village name to find local museums).

If you have any other practical questions in planning your own independent excursions, or if what you really want is to reserve a private driver so that you can relax and enjoy the ride, or go a bit further off-the beaten path, contact [NCSSienahost@gmail.com](mailto:NCSSienahost@gmail.com) with "excursion information" in the subject line and we'll be happy to give you a hand. We can also suggest excellent local guides for city and museum walking tours throughout Tuscany.

**CHIANTI:** Castellina in Chianti, Castelnuovo Berardenga, Gaiole in Chianti, Radda in Chianti.

In Castelnuovo Berardenga you mustn't miss a visit to Chigi Saracini Villa. In addition, a visit should be paid to the [Archeological Museum near Castelnuovo](#) or the [Chianti Sculpture Park](#).

For a list of restaurants and less formal places where it is possible to have something to eat, please check <http://www.comune.castelnuovo-berardenga.si.it/Comune/ristoranti.php>. Although the website is in Italian, by clicking on the names of the restaurant telephone numbers, web-site addresses and prices are available.

Guided tours of the territory around Castelnuovo Berardenga are also organized by the local government. If interested please check <http://www.domenicainchianti.it/eng/index.php>

For wine and food shopping in Greve in Chianti

check: <http://www.lecantine.it/cantineUtente/index.php?cambialang=en>

**CRETE SENESI :** Asciano, Buonconvento, Monteroni d'Arbia, Rapolano Terme, Serre Di Rapolano, San Giovanni d'Asso.

The landscape here is characterized by the distinctive masses of light-colored clay called Biancane (rounded) or Calanchi (sharper, eroded cliffs) and saffron-toned hills framed by elegant lines of cypress trees, as well as by its not-to-be-missed hot spring spas (in Rapolano Terme).

Serre di Rapolano, San Giovanni and Arbia are small hamlets in the Clay hills.

[Bosco della Ragnaia](#) . Immortalized in the work of Sheppard Craig, this mysterious and enchanting forest is filled with sculptures that lead you on a trail through the forest's intriguing and wonderful history. Here, in an area renowned for truffle hunting, you will also find the Museo del Tartufo Bianco.

**VAL D'ORCIA :** Castiglione d'Orcia, Montalcino, Pienza, Radicofani, San Quirico d'Orcia, Monticchiello.

A suggested route for self-guided drives through the Val D'Orcia: Siena-Montalcino-San Quirico-Monticchiello-Pienza-Siena

The essence of Val d'Orcia, the zone that probably provides one of the most dramatic panoramas around Siena, is well represented by the information available from the following website: <http://www.parcodellavaldorcia.com/en/parcob.asp> This is the official website of what is called the Cultural Artistic and Natural Park of Val d'Orcia and includes descriptions and lists of activities and places to visit in Val d'Orcia: Castiglione d'Orcia, Montalcino, Pienza, Radicofani, and San Quirico d'Orcia. The Val d'Orcia has just been named a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. This area provides tourists with one of the best selections of cheese, cured meat and wine. In fact, a wine tasting in Montepulciano as well as a tour around Pienza should not be missed. Pienza is famous for its pecorino cheese and it is also pleasant to walk along narrow lanes called 'love lane' or 'kiss lane'. More information about Montalcino are available

at <http://www.prolocomontalcino.it/index.php?lang=en>

For further information about Pienza please check <http://www.pienza.info/index.eng.php>

## OTHER PLACES OF INTEREST

**VAL D'ELSA:** Casole D'Elsa, Colle Val d'Elsa, Monteriggioni, Poggibonsi, Radicondoli, San Gimignano Note: For those interested, the Monteriggioni and San Gimignano are without doubts considered the gems of this area. San Gimignano, now an official UNESCO heritage site, is famous for its 7 towers. A stop should also be made at the ice-cream shop in the main square that has recently won an award as the best ice-cream parlor in Italy. For more specific information (including dates) regarding Monteriggioni please check: <http://www.monteriggioniturismo.it>. Other information about San Gimignano available at <http://www.sangimignano.com>

## WINE TOURS

If you would like to be accompanied by a private driver, (perhaps so as to enjoy the wine a little more!) contact [NCSSienahost@gmail.com](mailto:NCSSienahost@gmail.com) with "wine tasting" in the subject line and we'll be happy to give you a hand.

There are many "Wine routes" which lead the visitor along the "trails" of vineyards producing the different types of Tuscan wines. More detailed information about these routes can be found

at <http://www.terreditoscana.regione.toscana.it/stradedelvino/ing/index-ing.html>. Maps are available on the website by simply clicking on the icons on the right hand side of the screen. [Citta' del vino](#) also has more detailed information on associated activities.

For a taste of Brunello please check <http://www.consorziobrunellodimontalcino.it/>. If interested in visiting places where the wine is produced, a list is available by simply clicking on 'producers'. We highly recommend the Biondi-Santi vineyards as they are known as the inventors of Brunello. They give free tours of the cellars and have beautiful grounds. Tastings start at €15 or so but see the website for updates on 2010 prices, group prices and bookings which are obligatory

at <http://www.biondisantispa.com/en/indice/indice.htm>

## Chianti

<http://www.chianti-collifiorentini.it/uk/> English version still under construction

[http://www.villa-trasqua.it/index\\_en.php](http://www.villa-trasqua.it/index_en.php)

[http://www.castelloilpalagio.it/main\\_e.html](http://www.castelloilpalagio.it/main_e.html)

## Nobile di Montepulciano

<http://www.consorziovinonobile.it/innocenti/index.en.php> By clicking on 'producers' it is possible to consult the list and if desired, book a visit for a wine tasting.