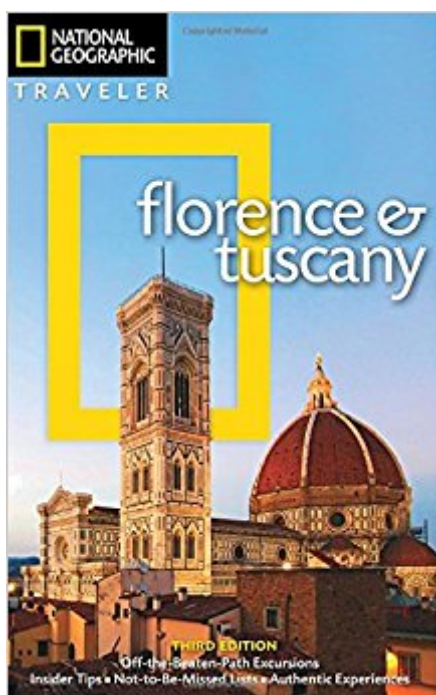


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National Geographic Traveler: Florence And Tuscany, 3rd Edition



Synopsis

Italy expert Tim Jepson takes you on an unforgettable tour around one of the world's most alluring regions. From the Renaissance gem of Florence, to such charming Tuscan villages as Siena, Montepulciano, and Montalcino, to the pastel-hued villages of Cinque Terre, and beyond, you'll fall in love with this area's art, culture, cuisine, history, and beauty. Features include self-guided walks in the heart of Florence and Siena, as well as drives through the wine-famous Chianti countryside and through the glorious Casentino. Experiential sidebars make sure you get to know the intimate side of the place, including learning to make the locally loved pappardelle pasta, helping to cultivate olives for the famed olive oil, and speaking a bit of Italian yourself. A Travelwise section details practicalities, including where to find the most gracious inns, delicious cooking, and tucked-away wineries. Aimed at active travelers who want authentic, enriching, cultural experiences and expert advice from a trustworthy source, National Geographic Travelers provide ways for people to experience a place rather than just visit, and give the true feel of each destination not easily found online.

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Customer Reviews

TIM JEPSON has been a passionate and lifelong devotee of Italy. Since graduating from Oxford, he has spent long periods of time living and traveling in the country, including a year in a remote Umbrian village where he learned fluent Italian and five years as a writer and journalist in Rome. Over the years he has written some 15 books on the country, as well as numerous articles for the

Daily Telegraph, Vogue, Condé Nast Traveller, and other publications. He wrote the following guides in the National Geographic Traveler series: Florence & Tuscany, Naples & Southern Italy, Piedmont & Northwest Italy, and Sicily. Now based in London, Jepson continues to visit Italy regularly, and, as a keen hiker and outdoor enthusiast, he takes a particular interest in the country's mountain and wilderness areas. He also revels in Italy's more sedentary pleasures—the food, wine, art, and culture—and hopes one day to indulge them all from a small Venetian apartment of his own.

"National Geographic Traveler: Florence and Tuscany, 3rd Edition" is an outstanding guide to Florence and Tuscany. I can say this because I have done just about everything described in the book, and if a friend asked me I would make a lot of the recommendations included in the book myself. It has been said that a travel guide isn't really useful until you have already been to the destination and so know what the content in the guide is really about. It's tough to read a guidebook at home, about a culture or country you have not been to before, and not have your eyes glaze over with facts and figures and histories that may not be meaningful for you until you are there, or you have been there, for context. But having spent a lot of time in Florence, and Tuscany in general, this book really hits all the right points, doesn't waste your time with a lot of filler, and has just the right amount of photos and detail drawings and maps to help you get the best from a visit to Tuscany. Travel books have evolved quite a bit over the past few years, and National Geographic Traveler: Florence and Tuscany is very much a contemporary travel guide in that it understands that people now have access to all kinds of travel information while traveling. For example, a staple feature of travel guides for decades has been restaurant and hotel recommendations. But, in the age of TripAdvisor and other rating and info web sites and apps and with every traveler, it seems, having a smartphone or tablet with them, is it really necessary to use up many pages, and to make a guide bulkier and less portable, to provide information and recommendations that may already be out of date by the time the ink dries? National Geographic Traveler: Florence and Tuscany wisely dispenses with an excess of these sections, although it includes a brief but concise guide to perennial favorites in an appendix at the back of the book. This would have been a minus many years ago, now it's a plus. The book strikes a fine balance between text and illustrations also, with very articulate and instructive explanations about what you need to know without veering off into lecture length presentations. It also avoids one of the great sins of many other recent travel books, in my opinion, which is the use of superficial, pithy adjective laden text and cheerleading. It is well written, has some opinions, but reasonable ones, and is a smooth read. It does not attempt to be

your new best friend or to blog past personal feelings and experiences at you. It is well written and, perhaps more importantly, well edited. Likewise the photos and maps are very helpful without becoming the kind of illustration clutter that are one of the big shortcomings of the Eyewitness guides, for example. The walking tours are just right to take you through various parts of Florence. The section on Siena is shorter than the one on Florence but covers what you need to know to make an enjoyable day trip to Siena or to stay there for a day or two while visiting other Tuscan hill towns. The snapshot sections of features and history for Chianti, Lucca, Pisa, San Gimignano, many other hill towns and the coastal areas are just enough and not too much. But, best of all it's all very useful and spot on, and the book is neither too large to carry with you nor so brief as to make you feel you might be missing out on something. If I had never been to Tuscany I would have been enthusiastic about this book just on its design merits, but having been to many of the places described I can say it will be a wonderful companion for your own trip there. RECOMMENDED.

We're planning a trip to Florence, Siena and Pompeii for this fall which means devouring all the travel guides online and in print between now and the minute we get off the plane. National Geographic helped get us through Thailand and Cambodia handily two years ago, so I chose their guide for Florence and Tuscany as my first one for our Italian adventure. First - the photos are lovely and crisp. Sigh...they make me even more impatient to go! There are also color maps and sketches of a variety of sites, ruins, churches etc throughout the region. This means you won't have to purchase or carry a second map at different walking venues or fiddle with your smartphone instead of enjoying the real life sights. The book suggests different "Experiences" available in different cities around the region - for example, hot air ballooning over Siena. There's even contact information for a company that offers ballooning with wheelchair access. As for us....well, we'll be going to the Jousting Tournaments in Arezzo which have been going on since the Middle Ages. The back of the book has the Travel Wise section and this is excellent. It includes basic, common Italian words and phrases, but my favorite is the Menu Reader. This lists things like sauces, meats, fruits, drinks etc and what they are. For example: prugna = plum or agnolotti = large filled pasta parcels or te caldo = hot tea. This is a well thought out, current guide to a region with more history and things to see than we can do in two weeks, but this book is definitely helping narrow down what we are really most interested in.

National Geographic, the expectation is gorgeous photographs and almost no content. They have a long history of telling stories in photographs and avoid the long story. The National Geographic

Traveler guide to Florence and Tuscany is exactly the opposite - few pictures and lots of text. And the text is magical. The book reads like a novel as told by somebody that has traveled the world over and knows this area like the back of their hand. The book is deep, incredibly well written, and illustrated with a few choice beautiful photographs. There are almost 200 pages about Florence. The coverage is that good and that deep. If you never travel to this region, the writing transports you there. And yet the book is exactly the right size, about the size of most standard travel guides. There really is nothing to add to this book. Where Frances Mayes flounders around pretending to be Italian and failing miserably, National Geographic succeeds by getting down to what is important and beautiful - they really do talk about off the beaten path and authentic experiences. This is a beautiful guidebook that needs to be read.

We were lucky enough to spend two week long vacations in this beautiful area of Italy, once staying with a family in Sienna and once in a fancy hotel (great bargain rates for three rooms) in Perugia. It is great fun to read through a new edition of a guidebook to see what has changed and whether there is something so fantastic that a third trip is essential. Even if there is nothing "new", returning is almost essential after reading National Geographic's newest edition of this fascinating area of the world. For my money, this is the best National Geographic Traveler I have ever read. Robert C. Ross June, 2015

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