



Independent walking tour (VF7)

Via Francigena

Bolsena - Viterbo - Roma

Along the final part of the Via Francigena through the Tuscia, the land of the Etruscans - from Bolsena, past Viterbo, to Rome



TRIP NOTES

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INTRODUCTION

This is a moderately challenging tour which is suitable for experienced walkers with a good general physical condition. Through the extensive footpath network of the area, roughly following the traces of the Via Francigena, one of Europe's most important 'highways' in medieval times, you walk from village to village, a full immersion in the world-famous Tuscan landscape, until arriving on the shore of Lake Bolsena, in the Etruscan heartland.

This last part of the Via Francigena is perhaps the area where the intriguing history of the area comes most alive. Here, more than 'only' walking over a medieval pilgrim's route you'll walk through the heartland of the Etruscans, an ancient civilisation which flourished in this area before the rise of the Roman Empire. This area, now known as the 'Tuscia' area, is an area where the layers of history can all be explored: apart from the Etruscan heritage, of course the Romans left many traces here too, among which one of the best preserves amphitheatres in the ancient city of Sutri. In medieval times a number of fortresses were built in several places, while during the Renaissance Popes and other wealthy families from Rome built their villa's here, often surrounded by superbly landscaped parks.

In addition to all this, the 'Tuscia' is also an area which features a great number of natural wonders, due to its volcanic nature. Your route starts from Lake Bolsena, Italy's biggest volcanic lake, a walk around the volcanic crater lake of Vico is a must, and perhaps you can refresh yourself at the 'gelato' waterfalls!

Of course the closer you get to Rome, the busier it will be. For that reason you will have to choose your route carefully. Some busier parts can possibly be avoided using the public transport. However we have already selected the quietest routes, and even within the city boundaries of Rome you'll be walking in beautiful forests.

*The 'official' route can be divided into 7 stages: from Bolsena to Montefiascone; from Montefiascone to Viterbo; from Viterbo to Vetralla; from Vetralla to Sutri; from Sutri to Campagnano; from Campagnano to Isola Farnese (or La Storta); from Isola Farnese to Rome, while in this tour one of the stages goes through the volcano of Vico, one of the natural highlights of the area, but many other interesting options are also possible. **Please contact us to know about the actual possibilities.***



Please note: this is a moderately difficult tour which is suitable for experienced walkers with a good general physical condition. Most of the walks are along good paths and small rural roads, sometimes on steep terrain. Average walking times: approx. 4 to 7 hours each day.



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DAY-TO-DAY PROGRAMME

Extra Day

Although not on the route of the Via Francigena, but a great place to start your tour, is Orvieto, located along the main railway line, halfway Rome and Florence and linked to Bolsena by a beautiful historical walking route. It's a must to make a short tour around Orvieto, known for its wonderful Duomo, but also one of the most interesting cities of central Italy, with some intriguing underground sights! A great walk brings you all around its medieval walls. Then walk down from the rock on which Orvieto is located and follow the ancient road - occasionally you'll walk on the Roman pavement - through forested hills all the way down to the centre of Bolsena, where you can settle in your comfortable hotel. In alternative you can take the local bus and dedicate the whole day to some sightseeing and relax after your week walking along the Via Francigena.

In case you walked along the Via Francigena to Bolsena, and have booked an extra night there, you can travel by bus or taxi to Orvieto in the morning, then visit the town and walk back down to Lake Bolsena. Or you could start walking down to Bolsena from Civita di Bagnoregio, and visit this stunning town in the middle of the surreal 'calanchi', the strange rolling hills south of Orvieto.

Accommodation: Orvieto, Hotel***

Total walking distance: 16,5 km. Approx. walking time: 5 h. (several alternatives possible)

Day 1 – Arrival in Bolsena

Arrival in Bolsena. Depending on your arrival time, you can go for a short visit to this beautiful old town, dominated by its big castle, or you can go for a relaxed stroll along the lake shore.

Accommodation: Bolsena – Hotel ***

Approx. walking time: 1 h. + sightseeing time

Day 2 – From Lake Bolsena to Montefiascone

The first day walk is an easy one which takes you out of Bolsena along the eastern side of the lake. Avoiding the busy Via Cassia, you'll walk mostly through the hills, full of Etruscan remains. From the lake shore you'll first walk up to the old town of Bolsena. Then through the hills you walk above the eastern shore of lake Bolsena all the way to the beautiful small town of Montefiascone. The walk is mostly through rolling hills, through olive groves, forests and orchards, along woodland tracks and on so-called *strade bianche* (gravel roads). Montefiascone is a beautiful small town, at exactly 100 km. from Rome. It was here that the 'Est-Est-Est' wine was born, and former popes left an enormous cultural heritage in the town centre, worth a prolonged visit. Its commanding position on a hilltop provides wonderful views of the whole of the *Lago di Bolsena* below, including the islands and the surrounding hills.

Accommodation: Montefiascone – Hotel ***/****

Total walking distance: 17,5 km. Approx. walking time: 4,5-5 h. + sightseeing time. Ascent & descent: + 400 m./ - 150 m.



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Day 3 – Through the rolling hills to Viterbo

After having paid a visit to the 'Rocca' and the gardens of Montefiascone, with a few 'Belvederes', from where you can enjoy beautiful views over the lake of Bolsena, you continue your walk in southern direction today.

After having left the outskirts of town and avoiding the busy Via Cassia, you'll walk on minor roads through the rolling hills. For those who want after about 10 km. you will pass the 'Bagnaccio' thermal pools where you could relax for a while in the steamy waters. From here it's less than 2 hours to Viterbo, a nice small town to stroll around and perhaps have a drink on one of the nice squares. Do take the time to visit the Palazzo dei Papi ('Palace of the Popes'), almost a small city by itself. Here you'll settle in your centrally located accommodation.

Accommodation: Viterbo – Hotel ***

Total walking distance: 18,5 km. Approx. walking time: 4,5-5 h. + sightseeing time. Ascent & descent: + 100 m./- 350 m.

Day 4 – Exploring Lago di Vico

After an relaxed breakfast you leave Viterbo in southern direction. There are two possible 'Via Francigena' routes from here, but we'll opt for the route which brings you to the beautiful crater lake of Vico. The initial part of this route brings you along the impressive town walls of Viterbo (which you can leave either through the Porta San Pietro or Porta Romana – to prove you are going in the right direction!). After having left the outskirts of Viterbo behind you, you'll be walking through the pleasant landscape of the Cimino Mountains, mostly through nice forests. After about three hours walking from Viterbo, you'll reach the ridge of the crater of Vico, now a nature reserve. You then have several possibilities to walk down into the crater, to the shores of the lake, before settling in at your nice agriturismo set in the crater.

Accommodation: Lago di Vico - Agriturismo ***

Total walking distance: 16,5 km. Approx. walking time: 4,5 h. + sightseeing time. Ascent & descent: + 500 m./- 300 m.



Day 5 – From Lago di Vico to Sutri

Today's route brings you to one of the most interesting cities of this part of Italy, Sutri. But first you'll have to get out of your volcano. The walk start which a relaxed, almost level section along the lake shore, but then you'll have to climb up to the crater edge again. Follows a short downhill section, which brings you onto the 'original' Via Francigena again. The first village you'll pass is Capranica, where you'll arrive towards lunchtime. You'll cross the whole 'centro storico', located on a narrow ridge, and then you descend to the Via Cassia again. Of course we'll avoid as much as possible this busy road: indeed you'll be walking almost entirely through forests and fields until reaching the town walls of Sutri. If you still have the energy, look around the old town, and do visit the Madonna del Parto chapel, an ancient pagan temple which was turned into a Christian church and features very interesting frescoes, depicting walking pilgrims!

Accommodation: Sutri - B&B/Hotel **

Total walking distance: 20 km. Approx. walking time: 5 h. + sightseeing time. Ascent & descent: + 150 m./- 400 m.



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Day 6 – From Sutri to Campagnano Romano

Today is a long walk, but mostly along easy, quiet roads. At the exit of the town of Sutri, do not miss the big amphitheatre, one of the best preserved in Italy. You then continue in southern direction, through a landscape full of evidence of the glorious 2500 years of history: Etruscan heritage, Roman artefacts and Renaissance villa's. The first part goes mainly through rolling hills, but with a downhill bias. Halfway the afternoon you'll pass the Monte Gelato waterfalls. Then you continue through the regional park of Veio, until you reach, with a last steep climb, the village of Campagnano Romano, where you'll stay for the night. Do make a stroll through the Venturi Park, where you can rest under a three-hundred-year-old yew tree, locally known as the 'Tree of Death'.

Accommodation: Campagnano di Roma – Hotel ***

Total walking distance: 25 km. Approx. walking time: 6-6,5 h. Ascent & descent: +/- 250 m.

N.B. This stage can be divided into two sections, and included a hike through the very interesting regional park of the Treja Valley.

Day 7 – Through the regional park of Veio to Isola Farnese

Also today a pretty long walk awaits you. Most of today's route will be within the boundaries of the regional park of Veio. The first part of the route carries through pleasant woodland and gives you the possibility to visit the beautiful Valle del Sorbo with its sanctuary of the Madonna del Sorbo. A bit further the area becomes more densely populated and you'll pass the nice medieval town centre of Formello. Towards the end of the afternoon you'll reach the most interesting part of the archaeological area of Veio, where you have several possibilities to make longer or shorter loops to visit the area. Again you'll end your day with a last steep climb, this time up to the nice village of little village of Isola Farnese, located on a ridge overlooking the Veio Valley. It is dominated by its Castello Farnese, from where you can enjoy great views over the surrounding woods and valleys.

Accommodation: Isola Farnese – Hotel ***

Total walking distance: 21,5 km. Approx. walking time: 5,5 h. Ascent & descent: + 250 m./- 650 m.

N.B. The Regional Park of Veio offers several beautiful roundwalks. Therefore – if you have the time and are interested in history, it is strongly recommended to book an extra night here.

Day 8 – All routes lead to Rome

A last stretch of the Via Francigena will bring you to the final destination of this journey. Tonight you'll celebrate your arrival in Rome! Of course, the closer you'll get to the centre of Rome, the more urbanised the area will be. You will however be surprised by the amount of nature you will come across today. The route we have chosen will bring you through a number of natural areas which literally penetrate into the heart of Rome. First you'll pass the strange wilderness of the Insugherata Forest and then you'll walk through the nature reserve of Monte Mario, Rome's own mountain. From the 'Belvedere' of Monte Mario you will have the first views on the dome of Saint Peter's! From here you'll walk down to the river Tevere, which flows all across the city. Following the nice walkway/cycling path along the river, you'll soon enter the heart of town. You'll walk past the Castle Sant'Angelo, and then you will finally be face to-face with the St. Peter's. The monumental '**Via della Conciliazione**' will then bring you to the great square, where thousands of pilgrims have gathered over the centuries. Have your picture taken, buy a postcard from Vatican City and then take your time to relax – and enjoy the Eternal City!

Accommodation: Roma – Hotel */**** (many options possible)**

Total walking distance: 25 km. Approx. walking time: 6-6,5 h. Ascent & descent: + 200 m./- 300 m.



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TOUR DETAILS

ACCOMMODATION & MEALS

All nights are spent in beautiful, characteristic family-run hotels (generally 2/3-star; 4/5-star on request) and beautiful *agriturismo*'s. All rooms have en-suite facilities.

On all nights you will be free to make your own dinner arrangements. You can choose from the wide choice of restaurants in the area. Your accommodation holder can give you good tips. No picnic lunches are included in the tour price, but these can be prepared for you by the accommodation holders, or materials for picnics can be purchased in the villages where you'll be staying. On some occasions you have the option to have your lunch in a restaurant along the way.

INCLUDED

- 8 nights' accommodation - BB
- 1 night in Hotel**** in Bolsena
- 1 night in Hotel*** in Montefiascone
- 1 night in Hotel*** in Viterbo
- 1 night in Agriturismo in Caprarola
- 1 night in B&B in Sutri
- 1 nights in Hotel*** in Campagnano Romano
- 1 night in Hotel** in Isola Farnese
- 1 night in Hotel*** in Rome
- Luggage transfer (a discount will be applied for those carrying their own luggage)
- Extensive route notes, with description of the route & tourist information
- Maps at 1 : 25.000 scale or better
- GPS tracks for each walk
- Pilgrim Passport
- 24/7 assistance

NOT INCLUDED

- Departure taxes & Visas
- Travel Insurance & Tourist tax
- Drinks and meals not mentioned in the itinerary
- Optional additional tours or activities
- Tips & items of personal nature



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ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE

Arrival: The tour starts in BOLSENA, linked by a frequent bus service to Orvieto, which can easily be reached by train from Florence or Rome.

Departure: The tour ends after breakfast in ROMA – the Eternal City. A frequent train service can bring you to the nearby international airport. There are frequent trains to all other cities in Italy.

LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

Moderate (3): Mostly moderately easy walks, with some long stages, involving some steep uphill walking, sometimes on paths with rough surfaces. On some days extensions or shortcuts are possible.

Fitness: High standard of fitness is necessary: you should be able to walk for up to 7 hours a day in the hot sun on dusty or stony tracks.

N.B. During summer the difficulty of this tour definitely increases due to the heat. We therefore advise against booking this tour during the period between about 14th July and 20th August.

FOOTPATHS & WAYMARKING

Footpaths: Most paths are relatively well maintained; you'll follow most of the time the official route of the Via Francigena, well maintained. A large part of the route goes along so-called *strade bianche* (unsurfaced roads), easy to follow and very unlikely to get overgrown (*we continuously check our routes – please help us by providing your feedback on the quality of the paths*).

Waymarking: A large part of the route is waymarked with the signage of the 'Via Francigena', but on some occasions we have found more interesting routes than those actually waymarked; therefore you should follow the route descriptions provided together with the maps. With these you will always be able to find your route.

TOUR VARIATIONS

It is possible to include some extra nights in your tour, in any of the accommodations 'en route'. For those who have never been to Rome an extra day here is strongly recommended.

At the beginning of the tour there is the opportunity to stay an extra night in beautiful **Orvieto**, which can easily be reached by train, and from where a beautiful walkway leads down to Lake Bolsena. Details and prices on request. Halfway the tour the tour can be extended with an extra 'loop' through the area of the **Treja**, a stunning regional park scattered with many Roman and Etruscan vestiges.

Longer and shorter versions, as well as guided versions, of this tour are also available. Prices on request.

UPGRADE/CHANGES IN ACCOMMODATION

It is possible to upgrade this tour, staying in more luxurious 4-star hotels.

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