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# *AMAZING VAL D'ORCIA: DISCOVER MONTALCINO, PIENZA AND MONTEPULCIANO*

***A UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2004, Val d'Orcia is one of those places that you can't miss when visiting Tuscany; its distinctive landscape has long inspired artists from around the globe. This itinerary takes you to Montalcino - famous for being the home of one of the world's great wines - Pienza - a Renaissance jewel - and Montepulciano, whose beautiful Piazza Grande was used for the main crowd scene of "New Moon".***

Have you ever thought of spending two or three days in Tuscany and visit **Montalcino**, **Pienza** and **Montepulciano**? If your answer is YES, then all you have to do is book your favourite Florence car rent

and set out for adventure! These three beautiful hill towns are located in the Val d'Orcia (just 2 hours and a half from Florence) which was added to **UNESCO World Heritage List** in the year 2004. Do you know or wonder why?

**1)** This Valley is an extraordinary reflection of the way the landscape was re-written in the Renaissance to reflect the ideals of good governance and to create an aesthetically pleasant picture.

**2)** Its landscape was celebrated by the artists from the **Scuola Senese**, which developed during Renaissance times; images of this Valley, and particularly depictions of landscapes where people are portrayed as living in harmony with nature, have come to be seen as icons of the Renaissance and have deeply influenced the development of landscape thinking.

**Montalcino** – our first stop - is situated about 120 km from Florence (if you travel along SP70, SR222, SP72 and SR2) and, first of all, the area surrounding this Tuscan hill town is a magnificent mix of grapevines and olive trees. Settled since Etruscan times, Montalcino was also a strategic point along the way to Rome and its fame derives mainly from the production of one of Italy's finest red wines named **Brunello di Montalcino**, the first wine to be awarded the **DOCG status**.

Take a seat in one of its dozen wine bars, enjoy a glass of ruby wine, visit the majestic pentagonal **Fortress** and beautiful **Piazza del Popolo** before continuing to Pienza.

**Pienza** was rebuilt from a village named **Corsignano**, the birthplace of **Enea Silvio Piccolomini**, a Renaissance humanist who later became **Pope Pius II**. Once he was Pope, Piccolomini asked the Florentine architect **Bernardo Rossellino** to rebuild the village as an ideal Renaissance town: construction started in 1459, the Cathedral was consecrated on August 29, 1462!

Admire the marvellous trapezoidal square surrounded by **Palazzo Vescovile**, **Palazzo Comunale** and **Palazzo Piccolomini**, enjoy the spectacular views over the Val d'Orcia landscape from the back of the latter... visit the Romanesque **Pieve di Corsignano** and set out for the third and last stop on this tour: Montepulciano.

Perched on top of a hill, **Montepulciano** is located exactly on the border between the Val d'Orcia and the **Chiana Valley**. Known as the **“Pearl of the 16th century”**, it is also associated with the wine that comes from its vineyards: **Vino Nobile di Montepulciano**.

Walk up and down **Via del Corso** (the street around which the town has grown up), see the marvellous palaces, churches and cozy little shops... take a rest in **Piazza Grande** and enjoy the magnificent **Town's Hall** with its famous **Bell Tower**, the unfinished **Duomo** and the ancient well called **Pozzo dei Grifi e dei Leoni**.