

11 APRIL 2011 CATERINA POMINI 15562

DISCOVER CHIANTI: A ONE DAY ITINERARY BETWEEN RADDA, GAIOLE AND THE CASTLE OF BROLIO

If you think about Chianti, the first images that come to your mind are its green hills sketched by miles and miles of vineyards, olive trees and cypresses; if you keep on thinking you will see its ancient stony walled villages, the beautiful curvy roads and the impressive castles. Using Florence as your base, you can visit Radda in Chianti, Gaiole and the Castle of Brolio in one day by simply hiring a car.

You can reach **Radda in Chianti**, which lies approximately 48 km southeast of Florence, by taking the SR222; along the road you will encounter the town of **Greve in Chianti** - the gate into Chianti -

and you can stop here for a quick visit before continuing to Radda. Radda in Chianti still preserves its nearly intact Medieval aspect and its ancient walls still defend the town center. Visit the **Palazzo del Podestà** in the main square and the Romanesque **Church of S. Niccolò**; just outside of town also stands the Franciscan **Convent of Santa Maria in Prato**, which dates back to the Middle Ages. Another point of interest we recommend to visit is the **Castle of Volpaia**, an ancient walled village near Radda: this castle in sandstone has a particular dark color that makes it different from all other castles in Chianti. Complete your visit with a glass of wine in the deconsecrated **Commenda di Sant'Eufrosino**, a 14th century church that has been transformed into a **wine bar**.

Not far from Radda lies **Gaiole in Chianti**, another Medieval town and still an important point of interest in this area. Because of its strategic position between Chianti and the Valley of the River Arno, Gaiole was an outstanding market place for the castles in the surroundings. Today, Gaiole features a lot of farmhouses, wineries and wine shops perfect for **wine tasting**. Around here there are also many castles, parish churches and fortified villages such as the **Castle of Vertine**, the **Castle of Meleto**, the **Pieve of Spaltenna**, the **Abbey of Coltibuono** and the magnificent **Castle of Brolio**.

The **Castle of Brolio** was founded by the Lombards and has been the property of the Ricasoli family since 1141; located at the top of an isolated hill, it dominates the southern Chianti countryside. The castle you see today is partly the new-Gothic reconstruction ordered by **Bettino Ricasoli** in the 18th century, the Renaissance gardens and the amazing English woods surely deserve a visit. From Brolio you can enjoy a breathtaking view over the countryside and clearly see Siena if you're lucky enough and the horizon is limpid; the castle is also famous for its **Chianti wine production**, the Ricasoli family has been producing wine since the Middle Ages and a tour of the castle also includes a guided visit to the cellars and the experimental vineyards of the estate. What is fascinating about Brolio is also the local legend of the **Brolio ghost**: on full-moon nights, the ghost of Bettino Ricasoli still walks around the castle and some assure they have seen him out walking the grounds or even riding a white horse with a pack of hunting dogs!

Conclude your Tuscany tour in a restaurant along the road back to Florence and have a delicious dinner.

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