



**BUDDY  
BOMBARD'S  
EUROPE**

## Italy, Tuscany – & the Medieval Splendor of Siena & its Palio with Buddy Bombard



### **8 Days, 7 Nights**

**Four morning balloon flights scheduled in Siena**

Seemingly frozen in time, Siena is one of Italy's best preserved medieval cities. Set in the heart of a gloriously serene pastoral landscape it is much beloved for its medieval charm. It is home to a large collection of castles and aristocratic residences, that blend into the stunning countryside. Visually, it is very pleasing, and it is clearly one of the most lovely areas in Europe to explore by balloon. Tucked in the convergence of eleven valleys, there is no end to the continuous flow of visual pleasure.



And then there is "Il Palio" of Siena, a glorious procession of medieval dress and pomp followed by a colorful and very exciting horse race, three times around the town square, bareback. It has been celebrated annually for more than 600 years.



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**Day 1** – Our trip begins as we meet at the Westin Excelsior Hotel in Florence. Check in and be ready for the dinner pick up at 6:30 p.m.. Our coach will take us to the charming country restaurant “Omera” for our first fine Italian dinner.

**Day 2** – Depart Florence in the morning for a short drive to stunning San Gimignano, the amazingly well preserved small medieval town with its impressive 14 towers. Lunch in its picturesque village square. We will then proceed to 5 star Le Fontanelle, a beautifully restored 13th century estate across the valley from the majestic Castello di Brolio. Dinner in our elegant surroundings where we will spend the next two nights.

**Day 3** – Enjoy a luxurious Tuscan breakfast over-looking a beautiful part of Chianti. A remarkably interesting one hour film by BBC of Siena’s “Palio” will be presented by Buddy Bombard in preparation for the exciting afternoon to follow. Luncheon will be served followed by the lovely drive to Siena and we are into “PALIO”, the passionate historical event which embodies the ancient rivalries of the city’s 17 neighborhoods known as “Contrades”. Since the year 1310 Palio has been a festival of immense pageantry culminating with a bareback horse race three times around Siena’s town square. We’ll take our reserved well placed seats for the traditional flag and drum corp performances by all 17 contrada. A magnificent procession led by 24 members of the mounted police of Rome is followed by 22 members from each contrada in spectacular medieval dress. The 10 horses running for the Palio enter the track, having just been blessed in their contrada’s crowded church. The first horse to cross the finish line with or without a rider is pronounced the winner. After much emotional celebration a superb dinner awaits us at Mugalone’s.

**Day 4** – Depart le Fontanelle for a private luncheon hosted by our good friend, the Countess Sandra Bianchi Bandinelli in her 16th century Villa di Geggiano. Her personable son, Andrea, shares the home’s rich past with us. It is he who makes the excellent wine we will enjoy at their elegant table. Then we will check in for four nights at 5 star Grand Hotel Continental in downtown Siena, a lovingly restored 17th century palace just steps from the Piazza Del Campo. Late afternoon free time in town, then meet for an intimate dinner in our hotel.

**Day 5** – Our first early morning balloon adventure takes us across Siena’s ancient rooftops, waving to the Sienese who lean from their windows to greet us with a cheerful “Buon Giorno!” From our balloons this medieval town is sensational and these city crossings are spectacular. After ballooning our guide will walk us through Siena’s narrow gothic streets with palaces, and the great cathedral built in the 1200’s. Towers, alleys,



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and romantic hidden passages lead to open piazzas and elegant boutiques. Today we'll be the private luncheon guests of our friend, Marissa Cardini, in her art-filled penthouse overlooking the ancient clay rooftops. Her daughter, Fiamma, is a treasured source of insights into the Sienese culture. Late afternoon free time in town, then meet for our dinner party.

**Day 6** – Again from a new location, we will drift across Siena to once more explore its remarkable richness. Upon landing our waiting ground crew will take us to our private luncheon as guests of our close friends, Princess Irina and Prince Girolamo Guicciardini-Strozzi. We'll dine at the family's Villa Cusona, dating from 994 and the setting for the movie, "The Winds of War". Their vineyards have produced magnificent wines for more than 1,000 years. After an exceptional afternoon with our friends and a gracious tour of their estate, we'll return to Siena for dinner.



**Day 7** – Early morning balloon adventure across Siena, to once again marvel at the charms of this exceptionally well preserved medieval town. Today's private luncheon is hosted by our friend Baroness Costanza Ricasoli at her massive ancestral home, Castello di Brolio. The huge fortress and wine estate has been in the family since the 11th century. The creation of Chianti Classico and Classico Reserva was the work of the Baroness' late husband's family at Brolio. Luncheon will be served in the ancient Knight's Hall where in 1555 battle plans for the siege of Siena were drawn, and where some of the battle armor is still kept. After a memorable visit we'll return to our hotel and meet later for dinner.



**Day 8** – Romantic Tuscany is spread before us during our last morning balloon adventure. We'll float across the historic roof tops for one last look at a place you'll never again experience in quite the same way. After lunch transfer to Westin Excelsior Hotel, Florence, arriving about 2:30 p.m.

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**August 14 - 21, 2012**

\$16,160 per person, double.

Single supplement \$2,756.