Italy: From Giotto to Gelato:  
The Art and Culture of Florence & Tuscany  
Led by Nancy E. Green  
Cornell’s Adult University  
November 5-13, 2015

Thursday – Friday, November 5-6  
DEPART U.S.✈Florence, Italy

Depart the U.S. on an overnight flight to Italy. Arrive at Florence airport. After clearing customs, meet with your driver and transfer to your hotel, the Grand Hotel Baglioni, centrally located in Florence. The history of Florence has passed through the Grand Hotel Baglioni; the elegant decor blends discreetly with modern comforts, harmoniously merging the past and the future. Meet your tour manager at the Hotel and enjoy the afternoon at leisure to discover the city. You may wish to start your immersion into the Renaissance of Florence with a visit to the nearby Santa Maria Novella: the Crucifix painted by Giotto, the wooden Crucifix sculpted by Brunelleschi, and Masaccio’s Holy Trinity are only some of the masterpieces housed in this beautiful Church. Depending on arrival time of all participants, your tour manager will be pleased to escort you on a brief orientation tour. Welcome Tuscan dinner at Hotel rooftop restaurant. (D)

Saturday, November 7  
FLORENCE

After breakfast, we’ll depart for a guided walking tour of Florence. We’ll reach the San Lorenzo district, home of the famous lively San Lorenzo market. Here we visit the Medici Chapel, incorporated in the beautiful complex of the Basilica San Lorenzo. We will pass by Pizza del Duomo; together, the Baptistery, the Bell Tower and the Duomo make up Florence’s Piazza del Duomo, the city’s religious center. We reach the Galleria dell’Accademia to see the famous David by Michelangelo.

Enjoy some local dishes today for lunch at a local restaurant. After dining, our next essential stop is the Piazza della Signoria, a 15th-century square that is home to the Palazzo Vecchio on the east side and the Uffizi Gallery just to the south. Piazza della Signoria came into existence as a result of the Guelph-Ghibelline struggles, when many Ghibelline homes were destroyed to create space destined for civic use. Still Florence’s civic and political center today, the piazza is adorned with many famous sculptures. We’ll proceed to Santa Croce Church, the principal Franciscan Church in Florence, featuring a wealth of art. Afterward, we’ll enjoy a visit to a mosaic laboratory to learn the secrets of this amazing technique. We’ll return to the Hotel for a Nancy’s Lecture #1. Evening at leisure. (B, L)
Sunday, November 8
FLORENCE

Following breakfast, we’ll depart for the Uffizi Gallery. The Galleria degli Uffizi is the most visited (over 1.5 million people a year, closely followed by Michelangelo’s David) tourist attraction in Florence and is home to the finest collection of paintings and pictures in Italy. After, we’ll visit the Duomo, the city’s geographical focus point, Giotto’s Bell Tower, and the Baptistery. Enjoy some free time for lunch on your own. Early in the afternoon we’ll visit the Bargello museum with its remarkable collection of sculptures and other works of art. Enjoy the rest of the afternoon at leisure for some shopping or personal activities.

If you wish to continue your discovery of the artistic jewels of Florence, we recommend a visit to the Brancacci Chapel, sometime called the “Sistine Chapel of early Renaissance” for its painting cycle, among the most famous and influential of the period. Dinner is at a local restaurant, where we’ll taste some local specialties. (B, D)

Monday, November 9
FLORENCE/LUCCA/PISA

Following breakfast, we’ll depart to Lucca and Pisa. Lucca is a peaceful place with narrow lanes that wind among the medieval buildings, opening suddenly to reveal churches, tiny piazzas, and many other reminders of the city’s long history, including a Roman amphitheater. This town is well known for its magnificent 16th and 17th century ramparts, which, having remained intact, encircle its narrow streets. Enjoy lunch at a local farmhouse. In the afternoon we’ll continue to Pisa to see its incredible Leaning Tower (entrance not included) Your visit of Pisa will include a sightseeing tour of Pisa’s Campo dei Miracoli, or Field of Miracles, to see the Baptistery and Duomo (entrance included). The evening is at leisure. You will have no trouble finding a nice restaurant or a little winery at which to spend a few hours with your travel companions. (B, L)

Tuesday, November 10
TUSCANY-CHIANTI

After breakfast, we’ll transfer to your hotel in the heart of Tuscany, the Chianti area. Before leaving Florence, we will make a brief visit to the Church of Ognissanti, almost completely rebuilt on a baroque design, hosting some beautiful masterpieces by Giotto and Ghirlandaio (including his “Last Supper”), which make it really worth a visit. Along the way we will stop for a visit of the American Cemetery before proceeding to Chianti, a perfect work of art. It is so beautiful as a whole that it is impossible to decide which component is the most appealing: the gorgeous grapes shining in the sun, the forest green hills, the ancient villas decorating the landscape, the richness of typical products, great food, superb wine, cultural visits, or easy relaxation. The beauty of this territory, known for its wineries, lies in the perfect
equilibrium between the soft forms of the slopes of the hills, with their nuanced colors, and the dense woods populated by ancient castles, secular parishes and beautiful villas. We will stop at such lovely villages as Greve in Chianti and at a local family-run winery for a visit and a country style lunch. In the afternoon, we’ll arrive at our Hotel, Borgo San Luigi, a charming Tuscan Villa immersed in the breathtaking countryside, overlooking rolling hills, decorated with endless vineyards and hundreds-years-old olive trees. After check-in, we’ll have a welcome drink and Nancy’s Lecture #2. The evening is at leisure. On this free evening, you may wish to visit the little village of Monteriggioni and try one of the many restaurants offering Tuscan specialties. (B, L)

Piero della Francesca. Enjoy some free time before departing for Montepulciano in the Val d’Orcia, its hills covered with vineyards, its warm colors and lively piazzas. Enjoy a view of Montepulciano, a renaissance town and an important agriculture center, which lies on a hilltop with panoramic views, it is famous for the production of the Nobile di Montepulciano wine. The village is a pretty destination, not just for wine lovers, but also for art and architecture enthusiasts. Later, we will reach a local winery; we will visit the cellar and enjoy a country style dinner with wine tasting. (B, D)

Wednesday, November 11
TUSCANY – AREZZO & MONTEPULCIANO

You will have some time this morning for a relaxing breakfast at the hotel and a walk to discover the Villa garden. Enjoy Nancy’s Lecture #3. We’ll later depart for Arezzo, a beautiful little city famous for its old town and its architectural wonders, and lately for being the set of the famous Roberto Benigni film “Life is Beautiful.” Upon arrival, enjoy a guided tour, including a visit to the Basilica di San Francesco with marvelous frescoes by Piero della Francesca. Enjoy some free time before departing for Montepulciano in the Val d’Orcia, its hills covered with vineyards, its warm colors and lively piazzas. Enjoy a view of Montepulciano, a renaissance town and an important agriculture center, which lies on a hilltop with panoramic views, it is famous for the production of the Nobile di Montepulciano wine. The village is a pretty destination, not just for wine lovers, but also for art and architecture enthusiasts. Later, we will reach a local winery; we will visit the cellar and enjoy a country style dinner with wine tasting. (B, D)

Thursday, November 12
TUSCANY – SIENA, SAN GIMIGNANO

After breakfast, we’ll visit Siena. Siena is a sophisticated, proud Gothic town that welcomes visitors from all over the world. Vineyards and olive trees characterize the landscape. The local gastronomy is inspired by the so-called "slow food" culture. The territory around Siena is actually the best example of Tuscan regional identity, rich in natural resources and agricultural productivity. Terraced hills and valleys rich in rivers, castles, churches and wonderful buildings dot the countryside. Enjoy a guided tour to visit the dome, Piazza del Campo, Salimbeni Square and Chigi Palace and the interior of the Cathedral and the Libreria Piccolomini. Later we’ll go on to visit one of the most charming and picturesque of all the Tuscan hill towns. San Gimignano is famed for its medieval towers which dominate the town in the way that skyscrapers dominate modern cities. Originally there were more than 70 towers built as symbols of wealth and as a security precaution by the town’s prosperous merchants. Today only 14 remain but they give you a feel of the wealth and grandeur of the town’s history. In recent times, the citizens of San Gimignano have realized they own an authentic, valuable, open-air, artistic heritage. With all of its medieval structure still intact, the council has been recently added to the list of UNESCO-protected heritages sites. Farewell dinner at hotel restaurant. (B, D)

Friday, November 13
TUSCANY ➔ U.S.
After breakfast transfer to the airport Rome Fiumicino airport for your return flight, 3 hours drive approx. (B)