

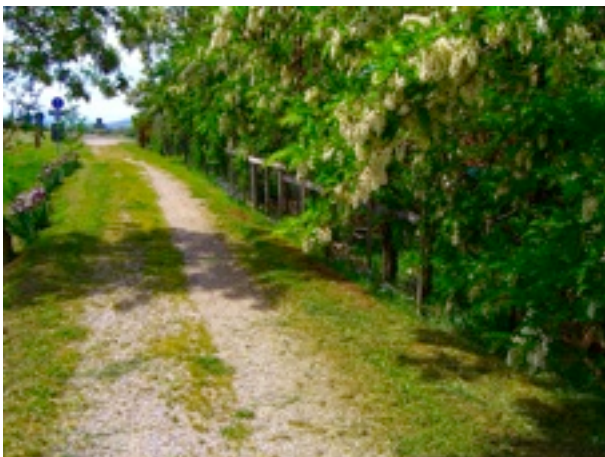
Part Two

Cycling the Sentiero della Bonifica

www.sentierodellabonifica.it 2012 www.johnseibelswalker.com



DAY TWO:



From our first night's lodging in Brolio, we decided to head the 20 km or so directly on down the trail to our next night's lodging near Montepulciano. If one were to spend several nights lodging only in Brolio, one could easily make round trip day excursions cycling from there to Montepulciano, Cortona, Lucignano, and Arezzo ~ all could be a perfect day's adventure using Brolio as one's only base on the trail! Having already spent time in all of those wonderful hilltowns over the years, we made day two of our one-way journey a bit longer by veering off the trail quite a bit here and there exploring several very small villages along the way. The famous Tuscan hilltown of Montepulciano was clearly in our sight guiding the way as we made our way southwards (see above photos).

That, and the pool at I Chiari (where we would be staying the next two nights) was beckoning!



Above: Just one of many examples of the old masonry inflow structures, bridges, and old hydraulic works that can be seen while cycling along the Sentiro della Bonifica as it follows the Chiana Master Canal.

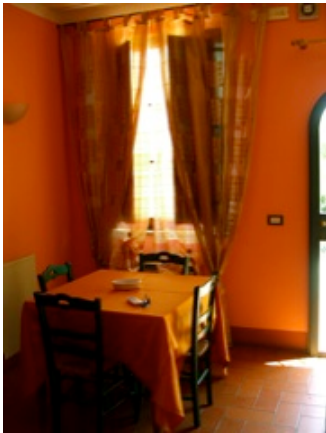


Our happy arrival to the country property and restaurant, I Chiari ~ where we spent our next two nights just off of the trail.



This was such a relaxed and spacious place to base out of during the second and third days of our journey! Once again, the owner greeted us upon arrival and offered us anything that we might like from the bar in hospitality.

With it being the kind of typical Tuscan country inn/restaurant known for its roasted meats “alla brace” (grilled over fire) and wood fired brick oven pizza, we started our stay with a cold beer and settled into our little apartment upstairs before heading down to the pool before dinner.

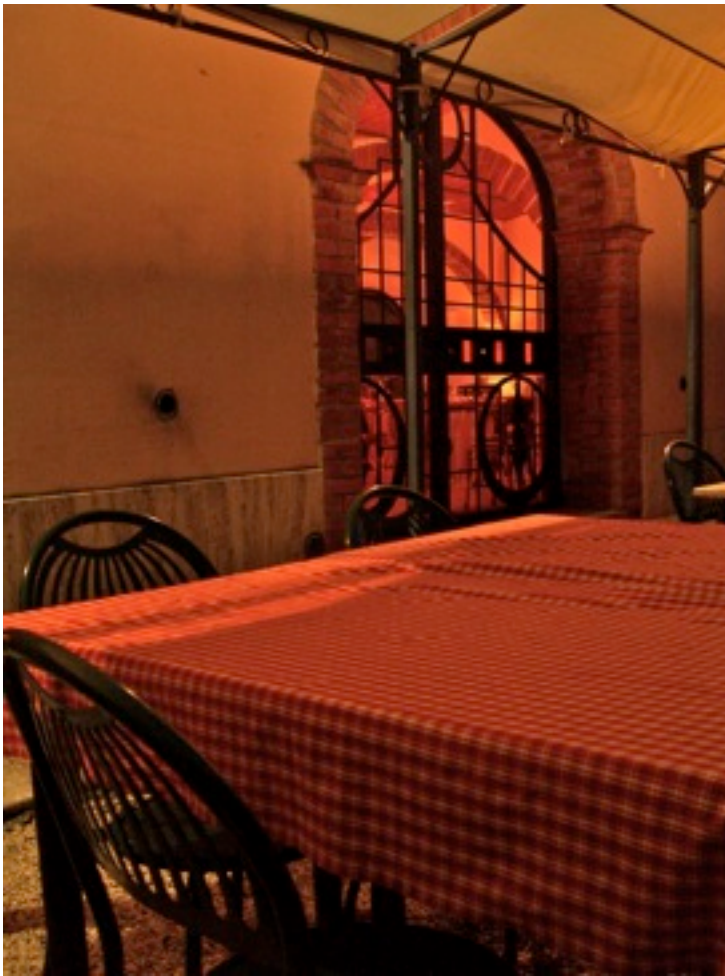


Our warm and simple sun filled apartment (full kitchen, dining, and living room) with large terrace would make a wonderful base for a family ~ especially with the casual indoor/outdoor restaurant right on property below the rooms and with the expansive private grounds, including a large pool area.

~

*Casa Vacanze e Ristorante I Chiari
in Acquaviva di Montepulciano
www.casavacanzeichiari.it*





We chose to enjoy dinners outdoors after the last light of day had faded, but the shots above can give an idea of the canopied outdoor tables and also the indoor dining room as seen through the spectacular iron doors and glass to the inside (an old stable building) ~ completely charming and full later on! The lack of lighting was not conducive to photography, but it was most romantic for us to dine al fresco in the cool evening air as we smelled the wood fires burning and feasted late into the evening.

I Chiari was a perfect spot to enjoy some of the excellent traditional Tuscan specialties of this area:

*Homemade pasta (like the regional pici) with rich meat ragu made from wild boar
or*

homemade gnocchi filled with porcini mushrooms served in a truffle sauce

~ just to name a few first courses.

For i secondi (the main course options), you would not go wrong with a bistecca alla fiorentina here~ or any of their grilled meat (alla brace) offerings, including any of the game.

If something even more casual were desired, their restaurant was also the perfect spot for a traditional wood fired pizza, some grilled vegetables, or a salad.

So ended day two as we made our way up the outdoor stairway to our apartment above. We were practically the only couple staying there midweek during the spring, so our stay was most peaceful ~ but we imagine that it could get very busy and boisterous out there on weekends!

DAY THREE:

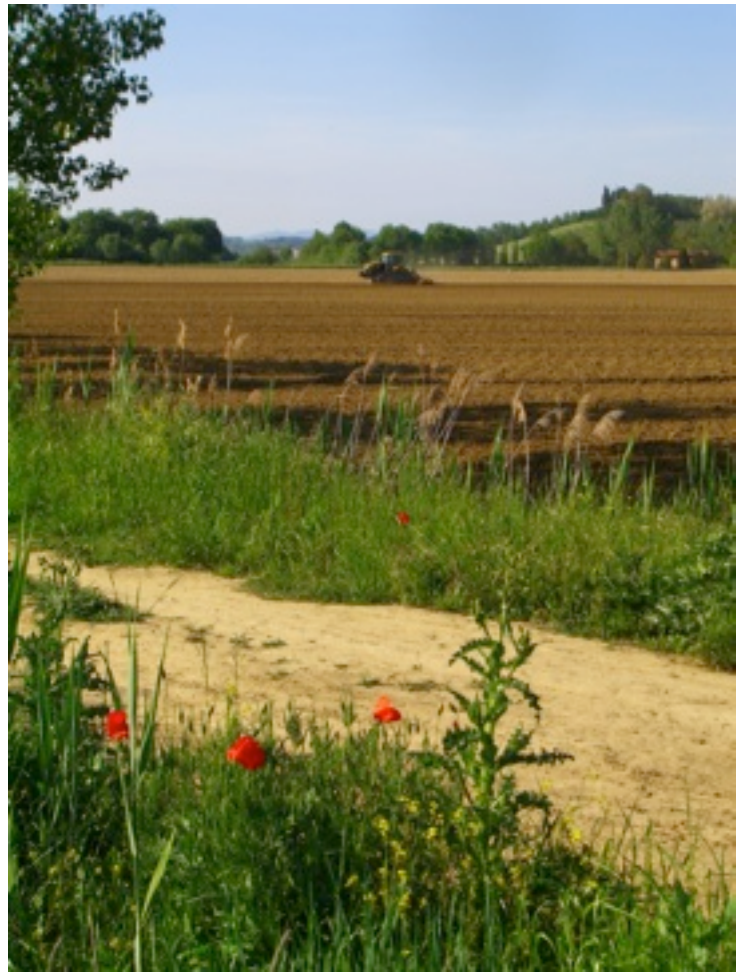
Cycling round trip from Montepulciano to the top of Chiusi and back



Another gorgeous day for us as we cycled the southern third of the trail both directions. The section south of the Montepulciano area takes you along two lakes, “Lago di Montepulciano” and “Lago di Chiusi”. This southern third of the trail is perhaps the most wooded and the most varied ~ quite beautiful.







Chiusi

It is up, up, up (with views) to the ancient Etruscan hilltown of Chiusi, after reaching the southern endpoint of the trail nearby. While up at the top, we took a nice break before our return to I Chiari





So that ended our discovery of the entire Sentiero!



We enjoyed every moment of early evening on the terrace our final night back at the apartment as we readied ourselves for one last bit of cycling the next morning ~ the final bike ride back up the trail and over to Montepulciano Stazione to catch our early train back to Lucca.

Cin cin!

*Karen (the girl behind the lens!)
and*

John Seibels Walker

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