



Castelfalfi

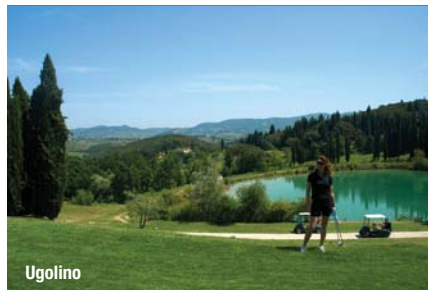
Tell someone that you are visiting Tuscany, the magical region of Italy that is synonymous with art, history, chianti, truffles and the Tower of Pisa, and the last reason they would suppose would be golf. Yet that is precisely the justification for eight journalists from all over Europe and the USA to descend upon Pisa airport at the beginning of November.

The programme offered a mouth-watering combination of sightseeing, experiencing local cuisine, and golf in the region. Some of the courses will be recognised by true golf aficionados, but some are previously unheard of. Having played golf on the shores of Lake Garda further to the North, I was not surprised to find courses of the highest quality, both in design and presentation.

Golf has been launched into the golfing stratosphere by the marvellous performances of the Molinari Brothers, Edoardo and Francisco, the first brothers to play in the Masters in 2010, and the teenage prodigy Matteo Manessero, plus the latest star Lorenzo Galli, who have all benefited from the work of the Italian Federation, following on from the pioneering performances of Constantino Rocca.

However there was so much to see and enjoy before arriving for the first teetime. The initial view of the famed Leaning Tower of Pisa is breathtaking, set in a spacious grassed area, alongside the cathedral gleaming in the sunshine. So beautiful and cast into the memory bank for ever. With the glow of the visit still present, we arrived for our first overnight stay, and the hotel was a delight, ideal after such an opening. Set in the old town, Bagni di

TUSCANY



Ugolino



Ruffino Chianti



Tower of Pisa

Pisa is an architectural jewel, with the aura of history and tradition. The suites are classic design decorated with original 17th century pastel murals, the décor is fascinating in all the public rooms in fact the entire location is superb. The visit to the spa was an experience to savour, rejuvenating the body before the pleasures of the restaurant.

Day two was defined as golf and truffle day, dual delights. Set in the heart of Tuscany, between Pisa and Florence, the Toscana Golf Castelfalfi was to be our induction to golf in the region. The perfect opener, this course is set in rolling hills with numerous lakes, and the iconic cypress trees, sometimes standing singly, at others like a row of soldiers on parade. The recently refurbished course was in very fine condition, all received a unanimous vote of approval.

Lunch was taken at the nearby restaurant Rosmarino, from one pleasure to another within minutes. After an excellent meal, with truffles and fine wine throughout, we left for San Gimignano, the city of a hundred towers, for a leisurely walk stroll to enjoy the spectacular scenery in the town.

Overnight accommodation was in Una Palazzo Mannaioni, set in a small medieval village in the hills. It was once a Tuscan mansion that has evolved into a five star luxury hotel, with literally everything the visitor could desire. The evening was started with a visit and an informative talk from the renowned truffle hunter and dealer, Cristiano Savini. The world record truffle weighing 3.3 lbs was discovered by him in 2008, it sold at auction for the sum of \$330,000 to a Chinese businessman. Every day his team of hunters go out to search for truffles to satisfy the world market, helped by not pigs but highly trained sniffer dogs. After the explanations it was time for dinner, with the truffles in evidence throughout the quite delicious dining experience. A stay that issues the challenge to return and savour again.

Every red wine drinker has at some time sampled the flavour of chianti, which was to be part of day three of the visit to Tuscany. After first playing at the oldest golf course in Italy. Ugolino Golf Club was formed in 1889, by British colonist living and working in Florence, it transferred to its present site in 1933. The club, designed by British

architects Blandford and Gannon is located on rolling countryside, that has been used to accommodate the course in spectacular fashion. Not long in today's terms, but a real pleasure to play and enjoy. The visit was concluded with a buffet lunch in the clubhouse before setting out for the Ruffino vineyards and a taste of chianti.

The icing on the cake came with a stay at Castello di Montemasso, set on the crest of the hill, it dominates the countryside from Florence to the sea. It dates back to 1091, though parts of the castle may be older. It has been magnificently restored and is now an exclusive luxury location with rooms available for visitors.

Our stay was enhanced by our host, Alfonso Folinari, a member of the renowned chianti family, who dined with us in the superb dining room. The perfect end to a marvellous day, with much more to come on our trip to Tuscany. Architectural history, good golf and marvellous food and wine.



Michael Rees



San Gimignano



Pisa Duomo



Castello di Montemasso



Castello di Montemasso

Information on all the hotels and golf courses can be obtained from Macana Golf & Leisure - Email: info@macanagolf.it

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