



The Most Beautiful Villages of Tuscany (The Most Beautiful Villages)

James Bentley

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Stand at the outskirts of a Tuscan village and gaze across one of the most extraordinarily rich and varied landscapes in Europe.

There are vineyards producing the finest wine, and miles of wild mountain scenery; almost any view will take in other villages, clustering around the upper reaches of some hill or the russet roofs of a fortified town deep in a valley. Tuscany has its grand cities—Florence and Siena—but their distinctive elegance is found on a more intimate scale in numerous small towns and villages.

There is a richness in these small places, of architecture and artistic life, which lends them an interest and complexity shared by no other rural communities in Europe. Their sense of civilization is deep and ancient, but it is the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance which have left their mark, tempting travelers and settlers from abroad from the time of the Grand Tour to the present day. Here is the village of Settignano, where Michelangelo lived and which also boasts the glorious Renaissance garden of the Villa Gamberaia. Piero della Francesca's lovely Madonna del Parto decorates the tiny cemetery chapel of Monterchi. The medieval towers of San Gimignano loom over the town's squares and streets like the backdrop to some surreal stage set.

James Bentley has chosen thirty-seven villages and small towns, both for their intrinsic beauty and for the part they have played in Tuscan history and culture. Page after page of Hugh Palmer's magnificent color photographs evoke the beauty and the wonder of this land. For the visitor, there are specially compiled listings of hotels, restaurants, and festivals to complete the tribute to Tuscany and its villages. 288 full-color photographs

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