Trip Overview
It’s hard to imagine a more perfect place to be than Tuscany in the spring. The allure of the vineyards, the smell of fresh pasta, and the Mediterranean sunshine will follow us as we trek through the Italian countryside. This unique opportunity allows us to fully engage in Tuscany’s rich culture and history without sacrificing an experience with the natural environment. Along the way from Montalcino to Siena we will stop to sample wine, explore museums, nibble on Pecorino cheeses, and taste true Italian gelato.

But this experience is about more than chianti, cheese and desserts. Tuscany is world renowned for its traditions, atmosphere and history. Long dinners can lead to great conversation, but there’s nothing quite like passing through a 1000 year old abbey like Sant’Antimo. In the same day we will wind our way through vibrant towns full of music and life, and pass abandoned frames of stone houses standing as monuments to a way of life that has never been forgotten. We will sleep in bed and breakfasts—some older than our country—run by Tuscan families for generations. This is the only way to truly experience Tuscan culture: with all five senses.

General Schedule of Trip
On June 1st our group will meet in Chuisi before shuttling on to the streets of Pope Pius II’s “utopian city” of Pienza. We will stop by an abbey surrounded by grazing herds before arriving in Montalcino for our vineyard tour on June 4th. The group will then continue over the Cyprus tree dotted hills and farmland to Buonconvento. We’ll wander through oak woods to the Etruscan town of Murlo, perched atop a hill and surrounded by stone walls, before continuing on to Siena on the 5th. From Siena we will hike through San Gimignano to arrive in world famous Chianti on June 7th, then transfer from Chianti to Florence for the trip’s conclusion on the 8th.

Italian Wine and Culture
In Ancient Rome, parties called “symposia” were held to fuel creativity with wine. The “symposiarch” would carefully monitor the group and dilute the wine with four to ten parts water to ensure the artistic, political, and intellectual aims of the night were not lost to drunken nonsense. 1200 years later under the patronage of the Medici family, the link between fine wine and fine art grew even greater as Florence erupted in the viticulture and timeless masterpieces of the renaissance. Even today the connection between wine, culture and art in Tuscany is inextricable.

Tuscany has always been a center for the arts, fine food, and cultural influence, and this trip was planned with each of these in mind. Our starting destination of Pienza was one of the first towns in Tuscany to be named a UNESCO world heritage site, and it only gets better from there. The group will trek north through Siena, a Roman city dating back to 70 AD, before continuing on to Chianti, famous for its wines for over 700 years.
Transportation
You are responsible for your own flights to and from Italy and transportation to Chiusi. For the duration of the trip, all luggage will be transported and waiting when we check into each night’s inn. All other transportation will be either covered in the trip’s cost or on foot. A valid passport expiring no sooner than January of 2015 is required for participation.

Preparation
Though we are walking without packs, 6-17 kilometers a day adds up. While some may begin the trek without training and be fine, there's no harm in being prepared. The terrain is mostly rolling countryside over well-traveled roads and trails and is not nearly as strenuous as hiking in Colorado, but you should base your preparation on your personal needs. If you can, get out and walk, run, bike, or move any way you like to accustom yourself to the level of movement necessary for this trip. Any activity will help prepare you for a great experience.

Accommodations/ Meals
In order to truly experience Tuscany we have selected a series of mostly three and four star inns and hotels. We will eat breakfast in these inns each morning. All breakfasts and most dinners are included in the price, and lunch is on your own. Everyone will have a chance to visit a local market to purchase their desired lunch each day. If you like a snack or energy bar from home, you may want to pack that in your luggage.

Over the course of seven evenings, we will enjoy six long, family style dinners together—a great time to discuss the next day and to get to know your fellow trekkers. Since most of our meals are set, we have allotted one evening as an opportunity for you to enjoy the culinary charm of Tuscany on your own. Alcohol not included with meals unless otherwise noted.

Weather
The average temperatures for Tuscany in May range from highs in the mid 70’s to lows in the mid 50’s. The chance for heavy precipitation is minimal with only a few days receiving rain over the last five years, but sporadic rain showers are a possibility.