



The Etruscans

Italy before Rome

14–19 September 2026 (MM 166)

6 days • £2,420

Lecturer: Dr Nigel Spivey

Visits some of the most important and best-preserved Etruscan sites in Lazio, Tuscany and Umbria.

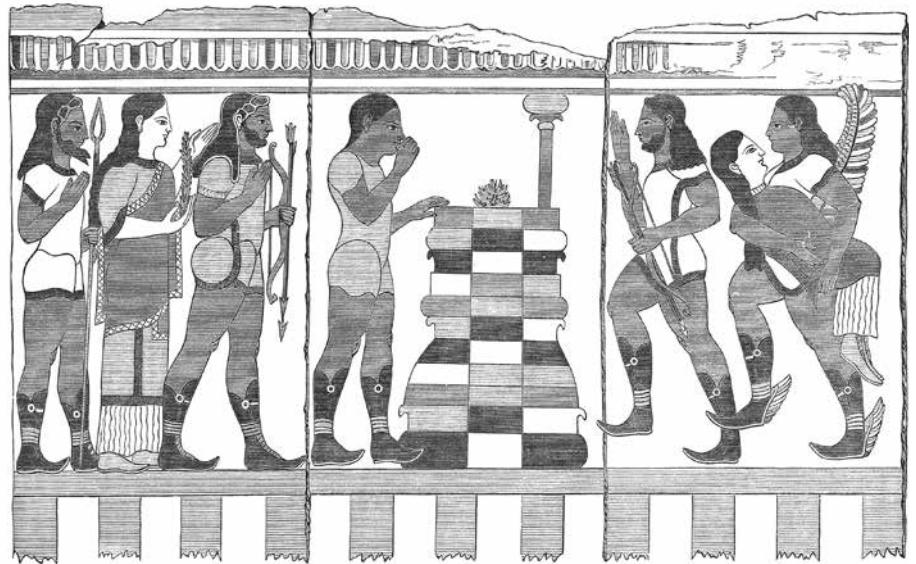
Explores a remote part of Italy's history, and areas of Italy's heartland which few tourists reach.

Led by Dr Nigel Spivey, Senior Lecturer in Classical Art and Archaeology at Cambridge.

'The mysterious Etruscans': for several centuries they flourished in the area between Rome and Florence, creating a federation of 12 cities and living in notorious splendour. Then, as the little village of Rome expanded into an empire-building Republic, the Etruscans succumbed, and were almost obliterated from history. Only since the 19th century has the extent of Etruscan civilization been brought to light, and the Etruscans restored as 'true ancestors' of modern Italy.

Our route is an exploration of the best archaeological sites and museums in northern Lazio, southern Tuscany and along the Tyrrhenian coast. By burying their dead with care and extravagance in cemeteries laid out with urban grandeur, the Etruscans left many clues to their way of life. We follow their trail, which leads to tombs cut from cliffs and rocks amid rich agricultural land, museums in medieval castles and a 'city of the dead' shaped in volcanic stone. Brightly-painted scenes of feasting and dancing have been revealed on subterranean walls. This is a landscape riddled with tombs (about half a million of them), but the atmosphere is far from morbid.

The tour offers an opportunity to visit a series of fascinating places on an itinerary that would challenge the independent traveller, journeying through beautiful countryside via some of the most charming and under-visited towns in Lazio and Tuscany. Dr Nigel Spivey has excavated at the sites of Cerveteri and Tuscania, both visited by the group, and studied Etruscology at Rome, Cambridge and Pisa for a dissertation on Etruscan vases.



Paintings from Cerveteri, wood engraving from *Cities & Cemeteries of Etruria* 1878.

Itinerary

Day 1: Fly at c. 10.45am (British Airways) from London Heathrow to Rome Fiumicino. Drive to Viterbo, where the first five nights are spent.

Day 2: Tarquinia. The UNESCO site of the Necropoli dei Monterozzi, part of a once-thriving Etruscan city, has outstanding examples of painted tombs depicting everyday life and scenes of the journey to the next world. The charming but rarely visited town of Tarquinia has possibly the best Etruscan museum in Italy, housed in the splendid 15th-century Palazzo Vitelleschi. Its extensive collection of pottery, jewellery and carved sarcophagi is testament to the prosperity attained by Tarquinia over the course of the seventh and sixth centuries BC. In the afternoon visit the Necropoli di Castel d'Asso.

Day 3: Tuscania. Prosperous and powerful in Etruscan times, Tuscania is now a pretty hill town. Visit an underground funerary complex in the surrounding countryside, then see articles found here and in other tombs in the area in the archaeological museum in Tuscania. In the afternoon visit the Etruscan museum in Viterbo.

Day 4: Sovana. In the archaeological park at Sovana walk along one of the Etruscan roads, flanked by towering walls of tufaceous rock, and see several noteworthy tombs, including the Tomba della Sirena, decorated with a sculpture of the mythological Scylla. Continue to picturesque Pitigliano for lunch.

Day 5: Orvieto. Drive inland to Orvieto, a major centre of Etruscan civilization until it was destroyed by the Romans in 264 BC. The inscriptions above the tomb doorways in the necropolis are some of the most important in Etruria for deciphering Etruscan writings. Much of the pottery found here is displayed in the town's two archaeological museums.

Day 6: Cerveteri. In the morning drive down the coast to the UNESCO site at Cerveteri, a city of necropoleis ranging from the hut-like to the sumptuous, based on the homes of the city's wealthy inhabitants. Fly from Rome Fiumicino, arriving at London Heathrow c. 7.00pm.

Lecturer

Dr Nigel Spivey. Senior Lecturer in Classical Art and Archaeology at the University of Cambridge and Fellow of Emmanuel College. Among his publications are *Understanding*

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continued

Greek Sculpture, Greek Art, Enduring Creation, The Ancient Olympics and Classical Civilization: A History in Ten Chapters. He presented the BBC2/PBS series *How Art Made the World*.

Practicalities

Price, per person. Two sharing: £2,420 or £2,140 without flights. **Single occupancy:** £2,550 or £2,270 without flights.

Included: flights (Euro Traveller) with British Airways (Airbus 320); travel by private coach; hotel accommodation; breakfasts; 4 dinners with wine, water, coffee; all admissions; all tips; all taxes; the services of the lecturer.

Accommodation. Alla Corte delle Terme, near Viterbo (allacortedelleterme.it): charming 4-star in the countryside outside of Viterbo. *Single rooms are doubles for sole use.*

How strenuous? Unavoidably there is a lot of walking on this tour, much of it over uneven ground. It is not suitable for anyone who has difficulties with everyday walking and stair-climbing, as fitness and sure-footedness are essential. Coaches cannot always park near the sites, many of which are vast. Average distance by coach per day: 65 miles.

Group size: between 10 and 22 participants.

Combine this tour with: *Pompeii & Herculaneum*, 21–26 September 2026. We are happy to advise on linking accommodation and transport.