

# PLACES OF THE HIGHER SELF

## FIVE DAY JOURNEY THROUGH THE GREEN HEART OF ITALY

SEPTEMBER 18-23, 2017



In our everyday lives we are often too busy, distracted, or caught in the mundane to be open to the places of the Higher Self. Throughout history and across cultures, our ancestors have always created ritual space and time for the transpersonal to enter into the ordinary. Such holy places are often located on mountaintops and deep inside caves, in silent havens and in nature. Churches, temples, and mosques have been built to hold the polar tensions of spirit and matter, inner and outer space and light, as well as the community that shares the transcendent experience. As an expression of beauty, awe, and awakening, art has also always played a great part along this journey to our Higher Self.

Continuing with the theme of “Synthesis,” after the [International Meeting at Casa Assagioli](#), we embark on a Journey to the Higher Self. Starting from Florence, we travel east to visit medieval churches and mountain hermitages, allow our

souls to soar from La Verna, discover beautiful villages and, of course, enjoy the *cucina locale*. During this five-day journey, you will have a chance to discover places of transcendence in the green heart of Italy – in the forest-covered Tuscan and Umbrian Apennines, the home of many generations of seekers and saints of the transpersonal.

The journey is especially meant to be an open voyage of discovery and a direct personal experience of all that presents itself during its various stages. We will go slowly and quietly, allowing you the time and space necessary to directly experience the reality of the Higher Self, the key part of you that connects the personal with the transpersonal and, hence, the personal with the universal.

This journey promises to be a *fonte* of inspiration for anyone seeking the Higher Self in the natural beauty and surroundings of Italy. We hope to provide you with a journey that might help transform and strengthen you when you ultimately return to your daily life.

The trip is explicitly small-scale and non-touristic. We stay in small family hotels and dine in local restaurants. We travel only short distances and avoid hasty visits. The sole focus of the journey is to calmly and peacefully allow for encounters of the Higher Self in majestic forests and sacred places found in a beautiful area of eastern Tuscany and northern Umbria.

## YOUR GUIDES

**Catherine Ann Lombard, M.A.** is a psychosynthesis psychologist, writer, and researcher. Her publications include both popular and academic articles on psychosynthesis, as well as first-person essays on life in Italy. Most recently, she has edited *Freedom in Jail*, by Roberto Assagioli, published by the Istituto di Psicointesi, Florence. You can learn more about her at [LoveAndWill.com](http://LoveAndWill.com).



**Dr. Kees den Biesen** is a literary scholar, philosopher and theologian. Having specialized in early Christian literature, architectural theory and symbolic theology, he is fascinated by the interactions between art, intellect and religion.



Catherine and Kees met, fell in love, and married in Ireland twenty years ago. They spent six years in Italy renovating a 13th century home in Umbria while learning to search for mushrooms and prune olive trees. After a period of intense study and teaching in the Netherlands, Germany and England, they have recently returned to live in Umbria. Together they enjoy leading unique trips in Italy. Please visit [poeticplaces.org](http://poeticplaces.org).

## ORGANIZATION AND COST OF THE TRIP

The trip through the Casentino is organized and hosted by Catherine Ann Lombard and Kees den Biesen, the guides and facilitators.

**Included in the price:** all transportation between Florence and Gualdo Tadino, five overnight stays, 6 dinners, and 4 picnics.

**Not included in the price:** all beverages, participants take care of their journey to Florence and from Gualdo Tadino, including travel insurance.

**Cost:** € 985.00 per person when sharing a double room; the use of a single room costs € 125.00 extra. More expensive suites are also available for the first 2 nights.

**Registration:** please register by sending an email to [loveandwill@live.com](mailto:loveandwill@live.com) and making a non-reimbursable deposit of € 150.00. Bank account information will be sent after registration.

# STAGES OF THE JOURNEY

## THE NIGHT BEFORE DEPARTURE: FLORENCE

All participants travel independently to Florence and optionally arrive a few days earlier for a longer visit to the city or the [7th International Meeting at Casa Assagioli](#).

On September 17, the eve of Day 1, we gather at [Hotel Villa la Stella](#) at 7:30 pm, where your guides welcome you with *prosecco* and *biscotti*. After a discussion of practicalities and a brief introduction, we make a short drive up to Fiesole to enjoy a festive *cena* together.

## DAY 1: OVER ROMENA TO CAMALDOLI



*Camaldoli Hermitage*

We leave Florence for our first exploration of the Casentino valley. Passing by the abbey of Vallombrosa (958 m, 37 km) we reach Romena, where we picnic at the beautiful Romanesque *pievi* or “peoples’ churches” typical for the Tuscan *campagna*. The majestic *Pieve di San Pietro a Romena* dates from 1152, and the church is part of a contemporary spiritual center, the Christian community *Fraternità di Romena* ([Romena](#)).

Having gained our first impressions of some of the spaces and places of the Casentino, we then drive through ancient woods to the *eremo* or hermitage of Camaldoli (1104 m, 9 km) in order to get in touch with another spiritual dimension of the valley.



*Roberto Assagioli (fourth from the left) at Camaldoli Hermitage*

We visit *l'eremo* and then walk down through the forest to *l'abbazia* or abbey (816 m, 3 km), for a short refreshment at the local bar.

Afterwards, we ascend the slopes of the Central Apennines to the village of Moggiona (19 km), where we stay at the family run four star [Resort I Tre Baroni](#). It derives its name from the family name of the three brothers that own and run it.

## DAYS 2: THROUGH THE CASENTINO TO LA VERNA



*The Franciscan Sanctuary at La Verna*

The next day, we travel to Chiusi della Verna (952 m, 33 km), where we spend the day at the spiritual center of the Casentino, the Franciscan convent of La Verna, built on the beautiful spot where Saint Francis was the first in history to receive the stigmata.

At your own pace and discretion, you are free to visit churches and chapels, climb the steep Monte Penna (1283 m), attend services, and find time for silence, conversation, meditation and prayer.

You may choose to eat on your own in the *Casa del Pellegrino*, or join us for a picnic.

We return to the Resort I Tre Baroni for another delicious supper and night's sleep.

## DAY 3 GROUNDING OURSELVES IN TUSCANY



*Fattoria la Vialle, Tuscany*

In the morning, we leave the Casentino for Umbria. On the way, we stop at [Fattoria la Vialla](#), a family-run agricultural business, one of the oldest and largest organic-biodynamic farms in Chianti. In 2016, they received more than 300 awards for their wines, olive oil, and other products. We will spend most of the day there, grounding ourselves in the earth and appreciating its many gifts with a guided tour and special lunch.

That evening we arrive at our 4-star hotel [Le Terre del Verde](#), which was once a 11th century Benedictine abbey outside of Gualdo Tadino. Dinner is at the hotel.

#### **DAY 4 A DAY OF REFLECTION**



*Le Terre del Verde Hotel, Badia, Gualdo Tadino*

This entire day is for you to take the time you need to reflect on all we have experienced. You can spend time around the pool or at the spa or enjoy beautiful hikes on the 400-hectare estate along streams and up hillsides to the local castle and the 12<sup>th</sup> church of St. Anna.

A picnic lunch will be available to you for your own private enjoyment.

Dinner is at the hotel.

#### **DAY 5 THE APENNINES AND FONTE AVALLANA**



*Monastery of the Holy Cross of Fonte Avellana*

On this last full day of our trip, we travel into the Apennines to Fonte Avellana. Situated on Mount Catria at 1700 m, this 10<sup>th</sup> century monastery retains its original beauty through the simplicity of its architecture and its harmony with the surrounding nature. We will have a tour of the monastery and enjoy a picnic lunch, after which time you will have time to quietly explore the grounds and hiking paths for yourself.

We return to our hotel for dinner and take some time to share our experiences.

#### **DAY 6 DEPARTURE**

The next morning, we say our goodbyes after breakfast and transport you to the train station at Gualdo Tadino, where you can catch a direct train to Rome or other destinations in Italy.