

Family Business TREK

for Alumni & Friends

*An Adventure
in Professional
Development in
Northern Italy*

November 10–17,
2026

 **Cornell**
SC Johnson College of Business
Smith Family Business Initiative

Since 2022, the Cornell Smith Family Business Initiative has operated five student treks, an academic course led by Dann Van Der Vliet, the John and Dyan Smith Executive Director of Family Business. Criss-crossing Italy, they've connected with a diverse set of family businesses. Inspired by these educational journeys, SFBI is pleased to offer a Family Business Trek for Alumni and Friends!

In Italy, the role of family in business cannot be mistaken. Culinary tradition, artisan skills, and operational knowledge are passed down from generation to generation. It is also a country known for some of the world's best food, wine, and gourmet experiences. This special tour exists at the intersection of family business learning and culinary and cultural exploration. We will explore Northern Italy through the lens of family business, deepening our connection and experiences.

The journey begins in Florence with an optional pre-tour package and the first four nights are spent at a villa in the heart of Chianti, part of the Fontodi wine estate. The next two nights are spent in Parma, a historic city in foodie heaven Emilia-Romagna, and finally we'll end with a night near Milan-Malpensa airport. If you're a Cornell University friend or alum involved in family business, please join SFBI for this immersive trek!

*Imagine
yourself...*

*Connecting with fellow
alumni and Italian
business owners*

*Savoring Italian
culinary delights*

*Sleeping in a villa
surrounded by vineyards*



VILLA PECILLE

The Chianti lodging is very special: a 17th century stone villa that is part of the Fontodi wine estate. The villa is on the edge of town, just a short walk to Panzano in Chianti. The villa is surrounded by vines and garden plantings, with a peaceful atmosphere and a swimming pool. There is a wood-burning fireplace and panoramic terraces.

About Family Business in Italy

In Italy, there are estimated to be around 784,000 family businesses – more than 85% of the total number of businesses – constituting around 70% of employment.

Other European countries have a similar amount of family businesses: France (80%), Germany (90%), Spain (83%) and the UK (80%). The factor that sets Italy apart is that 66% of family businesses are fully managed by family members, while this applies to only 26% of French family businesses and just 10% in the UK.

Italian family businesses are also set apart by their longevity: of the world's 100 oldest businesses, 15 are Italian and, of these, five: Fonderie Pontificie Marinelli (founded in 1000), Barone Ricasoli (1141), Barovier & Toso (1295), Torrini (1369) and Marchesi Antinori (1385), are among the top ten oldest family businesses still active today worldwide.

Trek participants will explore why Italian family businesses seem to have unique staying power, as well as stronger family ties to the business through active management.

Where are we going?

This Trek will visit three different Italian regions: Lombardy (*Milan, Casorate Sempione*), Tuscany (*Florence, Panzano in Chianti, Castello Banfi*), and Emilia-Romagna (*Modena, Parma*).



Tour Hosts:

Dann Van Der Vliet
Executive Director, SFBI
dgv9@cornell.edu

Dann Van Der Vliet has spent more than 25 years educating and advising enterprising families. As the founding director of the Smith Family Business Initiative at Cornell University, he built one of the world's leading academic platforms for family enterprise education. Dann holds both a B.S. in Natural Resources and an M.Ed. from the University of Vermont.

Susan Hu
Assistant Director, SFBI
yh789@cornell.edu

Susan Hu supports the many programs and activities aimed at expanding the initiative's reach and impact and also engages students as part of SFBI's mission to provide education, networking opportunities, and knowledge. Susan obtained her bachelor's degree from Wellesley College and holds a Master of Architecture degree from Tsinghua University in China. She has been with Cornell University since 2017. She is a 2027 MBA Candidate at the SC Johnson Graduate School of Business, Cornell University.

Chianti, Tuscany

Tuesday, November 10—Friday, November 13

We will convene in Florence Tuesday morning to start the tour on a high note: jump aboard the minibus and travel south to Antinori Winery, a spellbinding site where cutting-edge architecture blends seamlessly into the Tuscan hills. Antinori is currently operated by the 26th generation, sisters Albiera, Allegra, and Alessia. We will taste their finest wines and have a gourmet lunch. After a short transfer, settle in at a villa in the vineyards on the edge of Panzano in Chianti, our homebase for the next four nights. We'll gather tonight for a seasonal gourmet dinner, prepared by Chef Mirella. Her fresh and local menu will pair perfectly with the vino made from the grapes surrounding us.

Wednesday's day trips will stay local to the heart of Chianti. Our villa is part of the Fontodi wine estate, owned by the Manetti family. We will tour the Manetti family's terracotta tile factory in Impruneta, La Fornance, as well as tour the winery itself. And it's peak olive time so we will also visit family owned Frantoio Pruneti to view their sophisticated olive press operation and taste some just-pressed oils. Dinner tonight is a high energy steak feast at Panzano's famous butcher Dario Cecchini's restaurant.

Thursday's immersive experience will take place in Val D'Orcia, a region to the south of Chianti that is so beautiful, the views are UNESCO recognized. We will spend the day with a good friend of Cornell University, Cristina Mariani-May, president of Castello Banfi, a leading Tuscan winery of the famous Brunello di Montalcino. We'll have a guided tour of the estate and a gorgeous lunch.

For our last day in Chianti, on Friday, we'll slow the pace and enjoy a leisurely day at the villa. Massages will be offered at the villa this morning (from 90€, Onward will send sign up info in advance). Wander into Panzano for lunch and enjoy a walk or siesta. Late afternoon, Chef Mirella will join us for a hands-on cooking class that will surely be a highlight.

Don't Miss Florence!

This itinerary does not include time in Florence but it is such a fabulous, beautiful city, do consider arriving early for a few days of self-guided fun in the seat of the Italian Renaissance! Florence is walkable and photogenic... full of markets, museums, cultural sites, and great eateries.

Take advantage of our optional Florence add-on package and we'll organize your hotel arrangements at the lovely, central Hotel Pendini. For travelers spending 2 or 3 nights in Florence, join a private three-hour walking tour Friday morning with a delightful, engaging and informative local guide who will show you highlights of the city and make local shopping and dining recommendations, plus take you to Galleria dell'Accademia to see Michelangelo's David. A sightseeing guide will be mailed in advance.

Guests who elect this package will be picked up at Hotel Pendini to commence the tour. Breakfast and private en suite room included. Inquire with Onward about upgrading to Deluxe accommodations or for triple/quadruple rates and availability.

1 Night (Nov 9-10) at Hotel Pendini

Double Occupancy, \$85/guest; Single Occupancy, \$150/guest

2 Nights (Nov 8-10) at Hotel Pendini

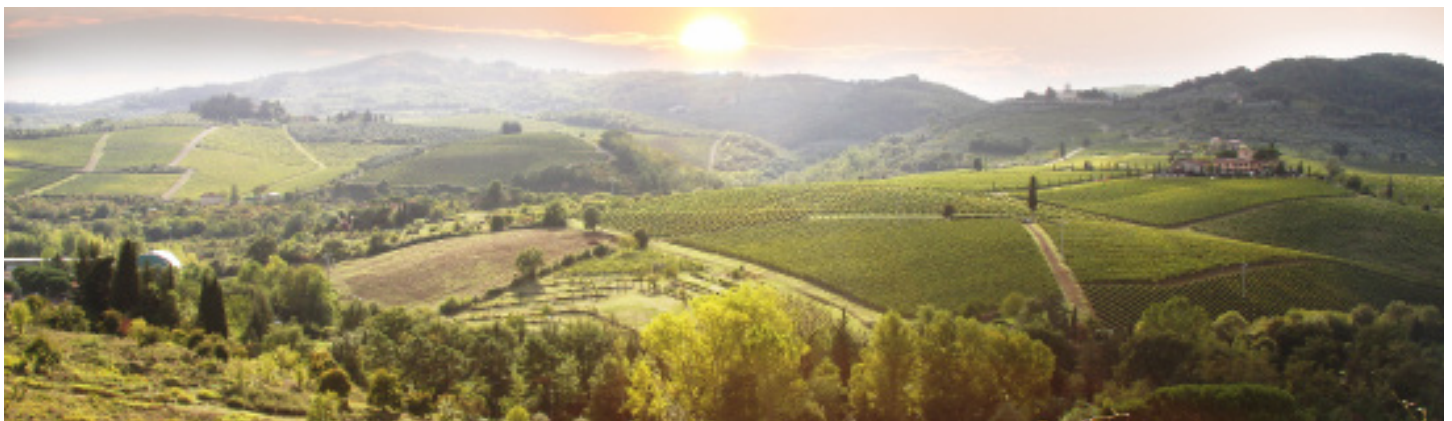
with Walking Tour including Galleria dell'Accademia

Double Occupancy, \$220/guest; Single Occupancy, \$350/guest

3 Nights (Nov 7-10) at Hotel Pendini

with Walking Tour including Galleria dell'Accademia

Double Occupancy, \$305/guest; Single Occupancy, \$495/guest



Emilia-Romagna

Saturday November 14 & Sunday, November 15

We've planned a weekend in foodie heaven! Emilia-Romagna is the region of Italy with the most number of food products that are government recognized and protected, classified as DOP and ICP. Parmigiano Reggiano cheese, Parma ham, traditional balsamic vinegar from Modena, Culatello salami, tagliatelle and tortellini pasta... It is the producers and artisan businesses that keep these products alive.

Our first stop is Modena, where the Pedroni family makes balsamic vinegar. It is a small, family run operation with a lovely restaurant and 6th generation Giuseppe III at the helm. Following an in-depth visit at the acetaia, we're off to Fattoria Moretto, a favorite stop of the student trek for a Lambrusco wine tasting. Early evening we'll arrive to Parma to settle in at Palazzo della Rosa Prati, a hotel with lots of character adjacent to the octagonal pink marble baptistry.

On Sunday, the day will begin at a Parmigiano Reggiano cheese factory where we will learn about cheese making as we watch it in action. Local guide Alice will explain the interesting process and history. Taste several parmesan cheeses...you will now forever be a parmesan snob! Good thing you can load up on the good stuff in their store. Then we're back to Parma with Alice for a historical walking tour including a visit to the Duomo to gaze at Correggio's frescoes. The rest of the day is free to enjoy Parma.



GIUSEPPE PEDRONI

Lombardy

Monday, November 16

Today we depart Parma in the morning and drive north to Eredi Angelo Baruffaldi, an artisan gorgonzola producer located west of Milan. Gorgonzola cheese is a DOP product and the Baruffaldi family has been making it for four generations. The current gen's father, Angelo Baruffaldi, was one of the founders of the Consortium for the Protection of Gorgonzola Cheese in the 1960's. Every day they make Gorgonzola Dolce and Gorgonzola Piccante, sourcing milk from local producers.

After an immersive visit, we'll arrive to Hotel Osteria della Pista. This family-run hotel is located near Milan-Malpensa Airport and has a restaurant that is popular with the locals. We'll connect with the current proprietors and enjoy a wonderful last dinner together.

Arrivederci!

Tuesday, November 17

You may depart any time from Milan Malpensa MXP Airport. No activities are scheduled today. Airport transfers will be arranged depending on departure times. Head home with wonderful memories, educational insights, and new friends!

EXTEND YOUR STAY IN ITALY

The Malpensa Express train, at the airport, connects you with the city center train stations, convenient for those who would like to extend their stay in Italy and travel elsewhere by train. See train schedules at www.trenitalia.com. Many flights are also available from MXP. If you wish to add night(s) at Hotel Osteria della Pista, you may do so directly on their website at www.osteriadellapista.com.

It is possible to use Hotel Osteria della Pista as a base to explore Milan and surrounds. The Casorate Sempione train station is a 5-10 minute walk from the hotel. Tickets can be purchased directly on the train and it is a 40 minute train ride to Milan Porta Garibaldi, one of Milan's central stations. A taxi is 100-150€ euro and around an hour, traffic depending.

FAQ's & AIR TRAVEL DETAILS *Cornell SFBI: Family Business Trek*

Who is this tour for?

Building on the success of the student trek, this tour is for Cornell University alumni and friends who are involved in family business. The ideal participants are Cornell alumni who operate their own multi-generational family businesses or who do business with family and privately held firms, consult with them, invest in them, and work with them in private wealth management, mergers and acquisitions, banking, or consulting. That said, we welcome all alumni interested in traveling using family business as a lens to learn and engage. If you are not a Cornell alum or traveling with an alum, please reach out to Dann before registering at dgv9@cornell.edu. Unfortunately, current Cornell students are not permitted to attend as this falls during scheduled classes.

What's included??

Please see page 6 of the itinerary, but also note that almost everything is included for your week in Italy. There are just a few meals on your own and of course your pocket/spending money. International airfare is not included, but once you arrive to Italy, this tour is mostly all-inclusive allowing you to enjoy yourself fully.

I'd like to extend my stay in Italy, please advise.

That's a great idea! The tour begins in Florence and ends in Milan, both accessible by train and flight connections to all of Italy and Europe. We recommend arriving early to enjoy Florence.

Can I join the Family Business Trek as a solo traveler?

Absolutely! We expect this trip will be made up of couples, friends, family members and solo travelers. The camaraderie and shared experience is one of the best parts of travel. Our groups mesh and bond and have a lot of fun together. You are very welcome to come on your own and you'll be in good company! A single supplement applies, meaning you'll pay a bit extra for private accommodations.

What should I do about (insert phone/credit card/hair dryer/etc.)?

Before the tour we'll snail mail you a guide to answer all your questions about international travel: phone, money, packing list, etc! And of course we're there along the way to assist.

Do I need a visa to travel to Italy?

There may be ETIAS travel authorization requirements in place by Fall 2026, for Americans traveling to the Schengen area, including Italy. We will inform you of requirements. If in place, this will be easy and inexpensive to obtain.

I have an allergy, dietary restriction or preference, can this be accommodated??

Yes, of course!

Can you help me book airfare?

Yes of course, just get in touch. When booking your air, please note we recommend you book directly with the airline vs a 3rd party like Expedia, and book connections that are a minimum of 90 minutes.

Still have a few questions?

Send us an email:
letsgo@onwardtravel.co

This trip is an extension of the SFBI programming, and helps to support our ongoing activities in support of students and alumni in family-owned businesses.



Onward Travel is a boutique travel planning company. Onward was founded by two sisters, inspired by their family's cooking school on a farm in Bucks County, PA that offered culinary-focused travel to customers for over two decades. Onward Co-Founder, Molly Crist SHA '10 lives on her husband's family's apple orchard in the Hudson Valley, operated by the 5th generation of which many are Cornellians.



BEGINS	<p>Florence, Italy on Tuesday, November 10, 2026</p> <p>Arrival transfer provided mid-morning from Florence Peretola Airport, Santa Maria Novella train station, or Hotel Pendini. <u>Arrive in Florence by 10:30 AM.</u></p> <p>Travelers may elect to arrive early to Florence, see "Don't Miss Florence!" section for more information. Highly recommended to come early so no flight delays cause issues with the Antinori Winery visit.</p>
ENDS	<p>Milan, Italy on Tuesday, November 17, 2026</p> <p>Onward Travel will organize airport transfers to Milan Malpensa Airport (MXP).</p> <p><i>No activities are scheduled today.</i></p>
SUITABILITY & MOBILITY	<p>This tour includes walking for 15-30 minutes at a time, plus stairs and cobblestones. Travelers may always opt out of activities they deem too physically challenging but refunds will not be provided.</p>
TRIP LENGTH	<p>8 days, 7 nights</p>
LODGING	<p><i>Villa Pecille</i> 3 Nights A 17th century stone villa on the Fontodi wine estate, just on the edge of the village of Panzano in Chianti, with beautiful views and wood-burning fireplaces.</p> <p><i>Palazzo Dalla Rosa Prati</i> 3 Nights A 17-room boutique guest house, with a central location. Historic and comfortable, with a cafe/bar on site.</p> <p><i>Hotel Osteria della Pista</i> 1 Night 10-minutes from MXP airport but worlds away. This comfortable independent hotel has a terrific restaurant on-site.</p>
TOUR DATES & PRICE	<p>November 10–17, 2026</p> <p>Double Occupancy \$4950</p> <p>Single Supplement \$780</p> <p>Please note that air travel is not included and a current passport is required for travel to Italy. You are welcome to pay by credit card, please add a 3% surcharge.</p>

Trip price includes the following:

- Airport transfers and ground transportation to/from all scheduled activities,
- Seven nights private accommodations.
- Most meals: daily breakfasts, five lunches, and six dinners. We have fantastic gourmet experiences, wine included, of course!
- Onward Travel Tour Director and local guide services throughout the tour to truly understand our destination.
- Activities, tastings, business visits and guided tours as detailed in the itinerary.
- Taxes and gratuities.

Registration:

Visit onwardtravel.co/sfbi to complete the registration form and submit payment.

\$1500 deposit (\$250 non-refundable) due upon booking, balance due by September 1, 2026.



Please take note of the following useful information, and view more at www.onwardtravel.co/letsgo



Once Onward Travel receives your registration form, we will send you an **invoice** with instructions to pay the **deposit**.



If you'd like to purchase **trip insurance**, we suggest Travelex. For more info, call them at 800-228-9792 or visit www.travelexinsurance.com and refer to location number 32-0704.



Four to six weeks before the tour **we will mail you a packet** with a packing list, traveler directory and other useful info.



Make sure you know where your **passport** is now! For travel to Italy it should be valid for six months beyond your return date.



Onward Travel's cancellation policy in a nutshell:

- \$250 of your initial deposit is nonrefundable
- Cancel within 90 days and the full deposit is nonrefundable
- Cancel within 60 days and 50% of total trip fee is nonrefundable
- Cancel within 30 days and the full trip fee is nonrefundable

See the full *Terms & Conditions* at www.onwardtravel.co/terms

Get in Touch!

Contact Onward Travel with questions or special requests:
letsgo@onwardtravel.co
845-293-2729

THE TERRACOTTA TILES FLANKING THE WORLD FAMOUS DUOMO IN FLORENCE WERE MADE BY THE MANETTI FAMILY AT THEIR KILN IN TUSCANY. THE FAMILY ALSO OWNS THE FONTODI WINE ESTATE WHERE WE'LL BE STAYING, AND THEY LOOK FORWARD TO WELCOMING US.

