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Bambino on Board

Strolling Through Siena: A City's Highlights and Baby-Friendly Rest Stops

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the do-it-yourself internet or guidebook search, I've found it far more reassuring to partner with an agency that specializes in European destinations.

Expect to pay from €150 to €250 three-hour private tour. Sure it's a splurge, but because Siena is a fairly large city with a detailed history it was worth it to make this our one private tour for the month (separate from wine tours, of course, which are modestly priced.)


ME's advice has always been spot-on. And, in this case, I needed a guide sensitive to stroller-accessible Siena and who was comfortable with babies. They set me up with Bettina, a perfect choice – she even knew the most convenient diaper-changing spot in the Duomo (the restrooms near the 15th century frescoes).

Bettina was impossible not to love. Siena's steep, stone-laid streets are far from stroller-friendly, but, for three-and-a-half hours, she escorted us on a customized walk we never needed to carry our stroller up any steps. While that might seem like a minor consideration, take a 23-pound, 4-ounce baby, add an 11-pound stroller, plus 27 pounds of equipment and gear, and then throw in 50- and 60-step portages up 28-percent grade hills made of bumpy stone and trust me, you've got a hassle.

Speaking of strollers: We brought our rugged [stroller](#) from home. It's our largest piece of gear, taking up nearly half our rental's trunk space, but it's been an invaluable transport source for Max. Cheap strollers are not a good match for the uneven patchwork of stones and cobble that line much of medieval Europe's streets, and ours is a true workhorse.

The archetypical backpack didn't get left behind, though – well, the [baby backpack](#) that is. Ours has been a welcome complement to our stroller, and Max switches frequently between the two throughout the day.

As for our experience in Siena, the tour was great, and Jana and I are planning to return next week for the practice round of [Il Palio](#). This traditional (since 1644) horse race around the Piazza del Campo (main square) pits the town's contradas (wards) against one another. The actual race, July 2, will be far too crowded for us to get a view. And it probably wouldn't be the most bambino friendly environment, either.

This weekend marks the half-way point for our trip, and despite just a two-week time span, I'm noticing remarkable changes in Max. He's [crawling](#) , talking more, and exhibiting much better fine motor development (not to mention nearly flawless Italian grammar). These are subtle changes, to be sure, but I appreciate how fortunate I've been to spend uninterrupted time with him.

As I finish this, I'm looking over at him lying in his crib, his afternoon siesta nearly finished. We'll soon eat dinner (formula and strained squash for him, pasta for Jana and me) and head into town for espresso and gelato (our second of each for the day.)

Truly *la dolce vita*.