

**ITALY WITH FRIENDS**  
**Highlights of Northern Italy Tour**  
**August 31 – September 11, 2016**  
(Itinerary is subject to change and variations with and/or without notice.)

**DAY 0 – Tuesday, August 30, 2016 - DEPART USA** (Remember you will arrive in Europe the day after you depart the USA)

**Day 1 – Wednesday, August 31, 2016 - Benvenuto to Italy! Venice, "La Serenissima"**

Welcome to Venice. We will meet in the hotel lobby for orientation followed by a walking tour through the back streets of Venice leading to the **Grand Canal** and the **Rialto Bridge**. Finally we will make our way to **St. Mark's Square**. Napoleon referred to this square as "the most beautiful drawing room in Europe". If the weather is nice, sitting at one of the outdoor bars on the Piazza, listening to live music is a memorable experience. We will enjoy our welcome dinner at a lovely restaurant located on a typical canal. We will toast our adventures ahead with a Bellini, a drink discovered at Harry's Bar. (D) Light

**DAY 2 – Thursday, September 1 2016 – The Wonder of Wandering in Venice**

We will dive right into the historic center of what was for centuries Europe's top superpower, with a visit to **St. Mark's Basilica**, located on St. Mark's Square. We will also climb to its museum with fantastic views over St. Mark's Square and the interior of the church. We will then walk to the **Rialto Bridge** which has been a major landmark in Venice since 1588. It is lined with shops selling all the local wares. Across the Rialto Bridge is the commercial district of Venice. You will find the local market here and it is worth a visit. You will see more types of fish here than you can imagine and they are all fresh.

After lunch together, you will have the rest of the day for your own pursuits. You might wish to visit the other islands in the lagoon. Murano is the island where you will find the glass blowing factories. Burano is a tiny fishing village where you will find beautiful lace. Also, don't forget to take that romantic Gondola ride. (B) (L) Light

**DAY 3 – Friday, September 2, 2016 – The Veneto and Verona, City of Wonders**

Leave Venice and travel to the Veneto region. We will focus on the beautiful city of **Verona**. Verona is filled with wonderful sights. Some of the best Roman sights north of Rome can be found here including the "pink" marble Colosseum. Verona was the setting for the most famous love story in the English language, Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. There will time for a guided tour of this lovely city along with dinner al fresco in Piazza Bra. (B) (D) Moderate

**DAY 4 – Saturday, September 3, 2016 – Beautiful Lago Garda**

The area around Verona produces some delicious wines. We will visit a winery in the town of Soave. We will then drive to nearby **Lake Garda**, Italy's largest lake. The lovely town of **Sirmione** has a beautiful 13<sup>th</sup> century castle that is built out into the lake. There will be time to wander the tiny medieval lanes and take some time for lunch. We will return to Verona and you will have the evening free. (B) (L) Moderate

**DAY 5 – Sunday, September 4, 2016 – La Grassa, the Breadbasket of Italy.**

This morning we make our way south crossing the Po River into the region of Emilia Romagna, also known as the "Breadbasket of Italy". We will take a few moments however, to admire the lovely town of **Mantua** with its pretty castle set on the river. We will then head to **Parma**, known for its famous ham (prosciutto) and cheese (parmigiano). Parma is today one of Italy's most prosperous cities. We will visit the lovely Duomo, Baptistery and Opera House. We will then head to **Reggio nell'Emilia**, our home for the next three nights. Here we will settle into the lovely Hotel Posta located right in the middle of town. This non-touristy city is today one of Italy's most prosperous

cities. We will enjoy a delicious dinner together. (B) (D) Moderate

#### **DAY 6 – Monday, September 5, 2016 – Delicious Treasures of Emilia Romagna.**

This morning we rise early with the cows in order to visit a **Parmigiana Reggiano cheese factory** for a tour. They will walk you through the entire cheese making process, handmade by craftsmen using traditional methods handed down for more than eight centuries. You will have a chance to taste this delicious cheese in the little shop.

Then it is off to the countryside for a visit to the **Cavazzone Farm**, also a Balsamic Vinegar factory or **"Acetaia"**. We will take some time to find out all about this delicious and expensive treasure of this region. We will also enjoy a delicious multi-course meal, all made with Basalmico, at the Cavazzone restaurant. We will return to Reggio for the evening and dinner together. (B) (L) (D) Light

#### **DAY 7 – Tuesday, September 6, 2016 – Fun at the Ferrari Museum**

Today, we will venture out to the town of **Maranello**, where you will enjoy a visit to the **Museo Ferrari**. Here you can learn all about the famous Ferrari automobile. We will also take a guided bus tour through the actual factory that is so hush-hush, that you cannot even take pictures. There will be time for lunch together and for you to even drive a Ferrari if you like. (for an extra charge). We will return to Reggio for the evening. (B) (L) Light

#### **DAY 8 – Wednesday, September 7, 2016 – Stresa and Lake Maggiore**

We will leave "La Grassa" today and head into the region of Piedmont. The town of **Stresa** sits on the banks of **Lake Maggiore**, one of the most beautiful spots in Italy. Lake Maggiore is ringed by mountains and dotted with the Borromeo islands. Here you will have time to relax and enjoy the natural beauty that surrounds you from your hotel balcony or from the wonderful rooftop terrace of Hotel Palma. If the weather is nice, we will take a ferry ride on the lake, with a stop at Isola del Pescatori, (fisherman's island). We will walk into town for dinner together at a wonderful restaurant specializing in cuisine from the Piedmont region. Lake Maggiore borders both the regions of Piedmont and Lombardy. (B) (D) Light

#### **DAY 9 – Thursday, September 8, 2016 - La Dolce Vita on the Lago.**

Spend the day enjoying this magical setting however you like. You can visit more of the Borromeo Islands. Isola Bella is a must visit with its 17<sup>th</sup> century Borromeo Palazzo. You can ride the Mountain Cable car for fantastic views. Visit Lake Orta or hop a train to Switzerland. (B)

#### **DAY 10 – Friday, September 9, 2016 – Lago Como**

We say farewell to Lake Maggiore and hello to **Lake Como**, in the Lombardy region. Lake Como is a hazy, lazy lake lined with lovely villas, and crowned with snowcapped mountains. It has been the home to the rich and famous for centuries. We will visit the town of Como, known for its silk production. From here you can hop a ferry to visit other sites and towns on the lake. Bellagio, self-proclaimed "Pearl of the Lake" is beautiful. You will have plenty of time to immerse yourself in this beautiful setting. We will then head near **Milan** for our overnight. (B) (D) Moderate

#### **DAY 11 – Saturday, September 10, 2016 – Marvelous Milano**

Today will be busy as we enjoy a full day in **Milan**, capital of Lombardy. We will visit the main sights on a guided tour. The Milan Duomo is one of the most beautiful and ornate. You can even walk on top of its roof. The La Scala Opera House is world famous and you will have a chance to visit inside its informative museum. The finale will be a visit to Leonardo da Vinci's masterpiece, The Last Supper. There will be time for last minute shopping along the way. We will also enjoy our farewell dinner together. (B) (D) Moderate

**DAY 12 – Sunday, September 11, 2016 – Arrivederci Italia!**

Sadly, it is time to say “arrivederci”. Parting will be such sweet sorrow, but I know you will take along wonderful memories of time spent enjoying the Highlights of Northern Italy with new friends.  
(B)

### **THE FOLLOWING IS INCLUDED IN YOUR ITALY WITH FRIENDS TOUR:**

- 11 nights' accommodation in 3-4 star, centrally located hotels with private bath or shower.
- Many meals included: 11 breakfasts (B), 4 lunches (L), and 7 dinners (D).
- All ground transportation in Italy during tour. (Does not include airfare. Does not include transportation to and from the airport or train station)
- Guided sightseeing and entrance fees to select sights, wineries and museums as described in itinerary.
- Local VAT taxes and government fees, gas, highway tolls and parking fees.
- Welcome Bellini in Venice
- Pre-tour visit with helpful travel information.
- Plenty of memories to last a lifetime.
- Surprises along the way.

### **NOT INCLUDED IN TOUR:**

- Does not include airfare.
- Does not include transportation to and/or from the airport in Venice or Milan.
- Does not include remaining meals, alcoholic or non-alcoholic drinks at included meals.
- Does not include personal expenses such as internet use, laundry, mini-bar, or extra transportation in tour towns.
- Does not include travel insurance.

### **2016 LAND ONLY TOUR PRICES:**

**Tour begins in Venice and ends in Milan; tour is for 12 days and 11 nights.**

The total cost per person is **\$3150** with double occupancy. (Includes taxes, fees, and Euro exchange rate adjustment.)

Single occupancy supplement is **\$775**.

BFF discount of **\$100** per person for former IWF's tour members.

A **\$500** deposit will hold your place on the tour. Tours are limited in size. (Usually only 8 people unless I have another driver.) Payment is accepted by check or credit card through PayPal. (5% fee if using PayPal) Your deposit is credited against the total tour cost. Final payment is required no later than **60** days prior to departure.

### **PHYSICAL DEMANDS:**

Prepare for a physically demanding tour. Age is not a concern so long as you are physically fit, a very good walker at an energetic pace, and able to stand for extended periods of time and climb lots of hills and stairs. All of the above could be done in all sorts of weather and temperatures. You are required to load and unload your bags into the van, and to carry your bag to your room. This sometimes could be a short distance from the hotel. Most days our sightseeing will cover anywhere from 2-8 miles of walking, sometimes over uneven surfaces. Plan to get in shape before you head to Italy.