

ITALY WITH FRIENDS "ITALIAN HOLIDAY" TOUR
October 1 - 12, 2017
Rome, Amalfi Coast, Sorrento, Pompeii, Umbria, Tuscany, Florence

(Itinerary is subject to change and variations with and/or without notice.)

Day 0 - Depart USA - Saturday, September 30, 2017

Remember you will arrive in Europe the day after you depart the USA. You will need to book your air travel so that you arrive in Rome early enough to check into your hotel and be ready to meet with the group for orientation at 3:00PM, on Sunday, October 1, 2017.

Day 1 - Arrival Day - Benvenuto! - Welcome to Roma - Sunday, October 1, 2017

Welcome to Italy! Arrive in Rome and meet at 3:00PM for orientation in the hotel lobby before we begin our sightseeing with a walking tour of Rome's historical district. We will visit the Pantheon, the church of Santa Maria Sopra Minerva, Piazza Navona, and the Trevi Fountain along the way. We will then enjoy a welcome dinner in a typical Roman trattoria. We will toast the start of our Italian adventure with a sparkling Prosecco. Salute! (D) Moderate

Day 2 - Roma and Vatican City - Monday, October 2, 2017

We will begin our exploration of this magnificent city with a stop this morning at Campo de Fiore with its lively market. We then continue our walk crossing the Tiber river on the Ponte Sant' Angelo with its beautiful statues of angels by Bernini. This bridge leads to the Castel Sant'Angelo, built as a tomb for the Emperor Hadrian.

From here we will cross into Vatican City, a tiny independent country. We will take some time for lunch together at a little outdoor cafe. We will then spend a big part of our day visiting the Vatican Museum with its famous Sistine Chapel followed by a visit inside St. Peter's Basilica, the largest and grandest church in Christendom. You will then have free time to enjoy this magnificent city. (B) (L) Very Strenuous

Day 3 - The Wonders of Ancient Rome - Tuesday, October 3, 2017

Today will be a full day of sightseeing starting with a walking tour of Ancient Rome's most important sights. The Colosseum is one of the most impressive sights in the entire city of Rome. We will visit inside and learn about 'Bread and Circuses' and the Gladiatorial games. We will enjoy lunch together in a restaurant overlooking the Colosseum. We will then walk among the ruins of the Roman Forum, the political and religious center of ancient Rome. There will be time to learn of the origins of Rome as we visit the Campidoglio which sits on the Capitoline Hill. We will also visit inside the Capitoline Museum, one of the oldest museums in the world.

Afterwards you will have some free time to continue your ancient history lesson with a visit to Palatine Hill or other spots in Rome. You will have the evening free to enjoy your last night in this wonderful city as you like. (B) (L) Very Strenuous

Day 4 - The Divine Amalfi Coast Escape - Wednesday, October 4, 2017

Today we head to Southern Italy for a visit to one of the most beautiful areas in Italy. The Divine Coast south of Naples is truly memorable. Here mountains erupt from the Mediterranean and pastel-hued villages cling to their sides. This area is filled with dazzling antiquities like Pompeii and breathtaking natural wonders. We will spend 3 days in this picturesque region.

When Mount Vesuvius erupted in AD 79, the lively port city of Pompeii was perfectly preserved by the volcano's ashes. Pompeii has amazed visitors since its discovery in the 18th century. Exquisite mosaics and wall paintings among the ruins of theaters, shops, homes and temples offer total immersion into the ancient Roman world. We will visit the site with a local guide and enjoy a tour throughout the excavations.

We will then head to Sorrento, known as the city of orange and lemon groves, which you will see everywhere. The perfume of the citrus trees is a reminder to sample the local liqueur, Lemoncello. You will find panoramic sea views from many points in town, including from the terrace/restaurant at Hotel Il Nido. We will explore Sorrento and its narrow Roman-grid streets, then sit down and enjoy a delicious dinner. Yes, we will toast our adventures ahead with some chilled Lemoncello. Salute! (D) Strenuous

Day 5 - Picturesque Villages and Amazing Mediterranean Views - Thursday, October 5, 2017

Today will be a full day of discovery on a drive along the famous Amalfi Coast, the most amazing of all the Mediterranean shores. It has also been designated a UNESCO World Heritage site. You will visit the vertical town of Positano, where colorful houses cling to a hillside overlooking the sea. Continue to Amalfi, once a mighty maritime republic. Enjoy a walk through the town and a visit to the Duomo di Sant' Andrea which glitters when the sun strikes the gold mosaics on its pediment. There will be time for lunch. Then continue your scenic ride up to the charming town of Ravello, with those never-ending views of the turquoise blue sea. We will dine together once again for dinner at the hotel's fine restaurant with those amazing views. (B) (L) (D) Light

Day 6 - La Dolce Far Niente - Friday, October 6, 2017

You will have time today to enjoy more of this heavenly location just as you like. You can spend more time in Sorrento. You could take a train or bus to other areas along the coast. You could hop a ferry to the magical Isle of Capri. Hire a private boat for fun in the Mediterranean. It is your day to spend as you like, even enjoying the "sweetness of doing nothing." (B)

Day 7 - Umbria, the Green Heart of Italy - Saturday, October 7, 2017

This morning we say "arrivederci" to the coast and head north into the Italian countryside. Umbria is known as the Green Heart of Italy. It is filled with forests and beautiful hill towns. Orvieto sits majestically atop an outcrop of volcanic tufa stone with thousands of caves underneath the city, dug out during Etruscan, Medieval and Renaissance times. Orvieto was once an important Etruscan city. Today it is famous for one of Italy's most beautiful Gothic cathedrals with a miracle behind its construction, and a delicious white wine, Orvieto Classico.

We will take time to enjoy this grand hill town. We will take some time to enjoy lunch together at Trattoria Tipica Etrusca. We will visit then inside the Duomo, 300 years in construction, with its San

Brizio Chapel covered in frescos by Luca Signorelli. You will also tour the fascinating Orvieto underground to see thousands of years of archaeological history.

Then we are off to be under the Tuscan sun with a visit to Cortona. We will stay overnight at Hotel San Luca and you will have time to enjoy this lovely Tuscan hill town. (B) (L) Strenuous

Day 8 - Tuscany and its Treasures - Sunday, October 8, 2017

This morning we continue our exploration of the region of Tuscany, one of the most famous in Italy. Our first stop will be in Siena, one of Tuscany's favorite towns. We will begin our exploration of Siena with Piazza del Campo or Il Campo, the heart of Siena. This is where the Palio, a renowned horse race, is held each year. There will be time to learn all about the race and the different Contradas of the town. We will also visit inside the famous Duomo. This cathedral is as ornate on the inside as it is on the outside. It has works of art by Michelangelo, Pisano and Bernini. The Piccolomini Library has some stunning frescos that depict the life of Pope Pius II. The frescos are just as vibrant as the day they were finished over 550 years ago.

After enjoying all that Siena has to offer, we will head out to discover more of Tuscany with a short stop in the tiny village of Monteriggioni. This walled village will take your breath away at first sight, nestled on the top of a small hill, with 14 towers still standing in a perfectly preserved circle.

We will make a stop at Fattoria San Donato, a working farm that produces olive oil and a delicious white wine called Vernaccia. This is one of the few white wines produced in Tuscany. The Vernaccia grape is only grown in a 50 kilometer circle around San Gimignano. It is a fruity white that was said to be a favorite of Michelangelo.

We will then head to San Gimignano, one of Tuscany's most popular towns. You will quickly see why it is referred to as the "Medieval Manhattan". The 14 towers that dominate the San Gimignano skyline are just magnificent. We will stay right in the middle of everything and you will have time to truly enjoy this magical setting. We will meet for a short walking tour of the town, followed by dinner at the wonderful restaurant, La Terrazza. (B) (D) Moderate

Day 9 - Chianti and Castello Verrazzano - Monday, October 9, 2017

San Gimignano seems to be a favorite stop on the tour. You will have some time this morning to enjoy it on your own. You will find many things to do in San Gimignano. You may want to climb the Torre Grande, the highest tower in San Gimignano that affords expansive views over the surrounding countryside. Thursday is market day in San Gimignano and you will wake to stalls set up outside your hotel door. This is a fun way to see a true slice of everyday Italian life.

Beware, there are some of the best artisan shops right down the street. This has always been an important trading center. It was on the famous Via Francigena: the most traveled of the medieval roads that pilgrims traveled to Rome. From the 8th Century, it was the route through France that linked Canterbury Cathedral in England and Rome, the heart of Christianity. Today you will find locally owned shops selling ceramics, soaps, alabaster, olive wood items, leather goods, etc. You will find a great selection of paintings and prints of the Tuscan area.

Also, do not miss the award winning gelato shop located right across from our hotel for a little taste of gelato heaven. Throngs of tourists come in and out of San Gimignano each day and it is especially nice to be able to enjoy it after the crowds have gone.

We will then meet for our day's excursion to the Chianti area. No trip to Tuscany would be complete without a visit to a local winery. We will visit one of the oldest in the region, the 11th century Castello Verrazzano. You will enjoy a guided tour of the castle grounds and ancient ageing cellars followed by a feast of homemade Tuscan favorites accompanied by a range of delicious wines made by the Verrazzano winery. You will have the opportunity to learn the art of wine tasting in this relaxed and amusing setting.

We will return to San Gimignano where you will have more time to enjoy this magical village. (B) (L) Light

Day 10 - Florence, Birthplace of the Renaissance - Tuesday, October 10, 2017

Today we say good bye to lovely San Gimignano and the peaceful Tuscan countryside. We will then head to the American Military Cemetery located just outside of Florence. The compelling sight of endless rows of white marble crosses recalls the heroism of the young Americans who fought so valiantly to free Italy from the grips of fascism during World War II. The 1940's may seem very long ago, but during WWII this area was terribly ravaged by the fighting. I feel it is an honor and our duty to take time to pay our respects to these brave soldiers.

We will then jump into the frenzy of Firenze, Florence in Italian. After time to settle into our hotel we will start our sightseeing with a tour of the main sights of Florence including the Duomo, Baptistery, with its famous bronze doors, followed by a walk through the medieval streets of Florence. You will pass Piazza Republica (Ancient Roman forum), leather markets, the sculpture studded Piazza Signoria and end at the oldest bridge in Florence, the Ponte Vecchio. Florence is known as an outdoor museum and you will have time to enjoy all the sculpture, art, and architecture that surrounds you. You will then have some free time.

Tuscany's cuisine is world famous. Today you will have the opportunity to learn how to prepare a Tuscan meal yourself. With the guidance of a professional chef, you will prepare several courses from starters like bruschetta, homemade pasta and sauce, a main course and finally dessert. You will then sit down to enjoy the fruits of your labor with a little vino. This experience is always a highlight for many of my travelers. (B) (D) Moderate

Day 11 - A Wonderful Day in Firenze - Wednesday, October 11, 2017

We will start our day with a visit to the Accademia Museum to enjoy seeing Michelangelo's masterpiece, David, along with a few other treasures. Seeing the "real" David is always a memorable experience.

Then we are off to the Central Market, which is filled with all types of food items produced throughout Tuscany. You will also find the San Lorenzo market here. This is a great place for finding bargains and souvenirs. You will have time to do just that. Shopping abounds in this town of designers and it is a great place to find those special souvenirs. There are several leather markets and the Ponte Vecchio is known for its many gold and silver shops. You might want to stop into my favorite chocolate shop,

Rivoire, located right on Piazza Signoria. You can find delicious treats and some unusual gifts. You will have a big part of today for your own pursuits and to plan for your journey home.

We will meet later in the evening to enjoy our farewell dinner. (B) (D) Light

Day 12 - Arrivederci Italia! - Thursday, October 12, 2017

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 on your amazing Italian Holiday with new friends. (B)

(Included meals are designated each day with (B) for breakfast, (L) for lunch, and (D) for dinner.)

VENICE EXTENSION:

DAY 12 - 14- Thursday, October 12 - 14, 2017 - Venice, "La Serenissima"

You will leave Florence on a morning train and arrive into Venice on Thursday, October 12th. You will check into Hotel Ala located near St. Mark's Square for two nights. There will be no planned activities or meals during your stay other than breakfast each day at Hotel Ala.

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), 5 lunches (L), 6 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.
- 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 Rome or Florence.
- 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.
- Does not include city tax required in each hotel. Can range from 1 – 4 Euro per person per night.

ITALIAN HOLIDAY 2017 - LAND ONLY TOUR PRICES:

Tour begins in Rome and ends in Florence; tour is for 12 days and 11 nights.

The total cost per person is **\$3499** with double occupancy. (Includes taxes, fees, and Euro exchange rate adjustment.)

Single occupancy supplement is **\$700**.

VENICE EXTENSION: \$400 ppd (\$250 single supplement) Does not include transportation to train station, does not include city tax or transportation to Venice airport on departure day. (Includes hotel for 2 nights and train ticket to Venice.)

A **\$500 non-refundable** 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.