

italian tours and

Travel by Diana

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f Italian Tours by Diana

Custom Tour of La Bella Italia

Day 1 Depart USA

International flights from the United States to Venice, Italy.

Day 2 Arrive Venice

Buongiorno e Benvenuti/Welcome to La Bella Italia! Upon arrival at the Venice Marco Polo Airport, you will be met in the arrivals hall, beyond baggage claim, by a private water taxi driver holding a sign with your name. Continue with them for transfer to your hotel. Check in to your hotel near the heart of the city. Time to settle in and adjust to the Italian way of life. At 6:00 pm or so, you should visit an authentic Venetian Bacaro. Bacari in Venice are a centuries old tradition and they can be compared to a very casual wine bar or Taverna. This is where the Venetians congregate at the end of the day to chat, socialize and indulge in savory cichetti which are small snacks made with the freshest ingredients of the day. It is a great way to rub elbows with Venetians and sample the most delicious examples of Venetian cuisine. Overnight in the unique water city of Venice. PWT/H

Venice



Day 3 Venice

Breakfast at hotel. Then at 9:00 a.m., meet your private bilingual certified guide in the hotel lobby for a memorable two to three hour walking tour of Venice. Venice, which is referred to as La Serenissima by the locals is a symphony of romance, elegance, mystery and invigoration. Built to accommodate an active maritime trade of exotic spice from the Far East, Venice and her intriguing history are fascinating. Rich in art, architecture and literature, she will take your breath away. You will venture into the heart of Venice to unveil her most precious treasures. The Grand Canal, will lead you to The Piazza San Marco and the incredible Basilica. Saint Mark's Basilica is a wonderful example of Byzantine Venetian architecture. It was at one time the Doge's chapel but it was also the mausoleum for Saint Mark, the patron saint of Venice, whose life is narrated in the golden mosaics on the walls. You will also explore the Palazzo Ducale or Duke's Palace (tickets included). This impressive structure is a

combination of Byzantine, Gothic and Renaissance architecture, and was the official residence of the 120 Doges who ruled the "Serenissima Republic" for 1,100 years. If you choose, you may explore the many lavish rooms and admire masterpieces by Tintoretto, Titian, Veronese and Bellini. As well, you may view the Bridge of Sighs as well as the famous Rialto Bridge, the oldest bridge in Venice dating back to 1172. Enjoy an independent lunch and the remainder of the afternoon at leisure. After lunch, you could try a relaxing ride in an authentic Venetian gondola. You may also choose to visit the gift shops around Ponte Rialto. Or, you can wander through the Dorsoduro neighborhood, a true Venetian area filled with small alleyways, bridges and small antique markets. Overnight in Venice. B/G/ET/H

Day 4 Venice, Florence

Florence



After breakfast at the hotel, check out. Your private water taxi driver will meet you in the hotel lobby and will take you to Venice train station. Here you will board a high speed train to Florence (2h). Your private driver will wait for you at the train track upon arrival in Florence for a transfer to your accommodation in the heart of the city. Check-in and relax. The remainder of the day is yours at leisure in the Renaissance city. During your free-time, you may choose to rest at a local trattoria or visit the open air markets of the San Lorenzo or the Mercato Del Porcellino for some genuine Florentine artifacts, leather goods and souvenirs. Overnight in Florence. B/PWT/TRTK/PT/H

Day 5 Florence, Chianti

Chianti Region



Breakfast at hotel. At 10:30 am in your hotel lobby, meet your private driver for a scenic ride to Chianti. Have your cameras ready as you cross the rolling hills of the countryside! At 12:00 pm, you will partake in a delicious and memorable wine tasting and lunch at our favorite castle in all of Tuscany! The sun-kissed landscape and 14th century castle will be an incredible backdrop to a wine tasting and exquisite lunch. You will dine on local specialties and learn about the food culture of the region and the

winemaking process. After this amazing experience, which will last several hours, return to Florence with your driver and enjoy the remainder of the day at leisure. Overnight in Florence. B/PD/WT/L/H

Day 6 Florence

Florence



Breakfast at hotel. At 9:00 a.m. in the lobby, meet your private bilingual certified guide for a pleasant 3 hour walking tour of Florence. This morning you will visit the Galleria Accademia to view the beautiful sculptures by Michelangelo, the slaves or prisoners of the rocks and the unforgettable statue of David. The Accademia houses some of the most important sculptures of Florence (to avoid the long lines, we prearrange entrance tickets for you). Then you are on to the famous Duomo of Florence (the fourth largest church in the world), with its grandiose cupola by Brunelleschi, Giotto's bell tower, and the Baptistery with its famous bronze doors. Your guided tour will include the Piazza Signoria and the Ponte Vecchio. After the tour, you will have time to independently discover something new in the city. Overnight in Florence. B/G/ET/H

Day 7 Florence, Le Cinque Terre

Breakfast at hotel. Early morning meet your private driver to start your exploration of Tuscany and Liguria regions.

Pisa



On your way to the Cinque Terre, you will stop in Pisa. Pisa's origins are unknown. The city lies at the junction of two rivers, The Arno and The Auser (now disappeared). While the Leaning Tower is the most famous image of the city, it is one of many works of art and architecture in the city's Campo dei Miracoli or "Field of Miracles", to the north of the old town center. The Campo dei Miracoli also houses the Duomo (the Cathedral), the Baptistery and the Camposanto (the monumental cemetery).

Meet your driver again to go to the Cinque Terre. Weather permitting you may board a boat in order to cruise from one village to the next. The five villages which make up the Cinque Terre, for “Cinque” in Italian means five, are Monterosso, Vernazza, Corniglia, Manarola and Riomaggiore.

Cinque Terre



The unusual landscape of this area was created by a series of folds which were formed when the rocks were pushed, raised and pressed together during the Tertiary period. During millions of years of erosion countless mini peninsulas and bays have slowly formed gifting this terrain with its modern day façade. From the study of jewelry and decorated shells that have been found in significant archaeological excavation, it has been proven that prehistoric man inhabited this stretch of coastline from very early times. This is time at your own pace. Instead of an organized guided tour, you will engage in leisurely exploration of this majestic land with its characteristic towns and rugged seashore. Engulfed in wind kissed vineyards, Le Cinque Terre is a chain of five small paesi (villages) which are connected by foot paths. Quite undiscovered until recently, it is a wonderful chance to indulge in the old world charm and grace of everyday Italian life. Much walking on less than perfect terrain is required during this leg of the tour. May I suggest a romantic stroll along the Via D'Amore? This evening, return to the La Spezia train station. Board a train and return to Florence for overnight. B/PD/H

Day 8 Florence, Assisi, Rome

Breakfast at hotel and check out. At 8:00 a.m. in the hotel lobby, meet your private driver outside of your hotel for transfer to Assisi. Upon arrival, meet your private bilingual guide for a two-hour tour around 11:00 am.

Assisi



Assisi is the famous hometown of San Francesco, the saintly symbol of peace around the world. The city was a Free Town during the XII century, and it was in this period (1182) that Giovanni di Bernardone (San Francesco) was born. The complex of the famous basilica dedicated to Saint Francis is composed of two churches, one built above the other. The lower church dates back to 1228-1230 and the upper one from 1230-1253. Far below both of these is the crypt that houses the saint's tomb.

He influenced life, religion and culture of Assisi, and later, of the entire world. Enjoy time at leisure in Assisi. Late afternoon, continue to Rome with your driver. Check in to your centrally located hotel and settle. Overnight in Rome. B/PD/G/ET/H

Day 9 Roma Antica

Breakfast at hotel. At 9:00 a.m. in the hotel lobby, meet your private bilingual guide, as well as your private driver, for a four hour tour of Ancient Rome in all its glory. As you plunge into the vivacious traffic of Rome, your senses will be simultaneously stimulated by antiquity and modern day society. You will feel the heart-beat of the city as you pass through the Piazza Venezia where you will admire the monument dedicated to the first Italian King, Vittorio Emmanuelle II. Today, it has been dedicated to the memory of the unknown soldiers with an eternal flame. You will pass the Teatro Marcello and The Circus Maximus, a site of many chariot races. You will take a stroll through the Roman Forum, rich with antiquity. Through the main square of Rome, crossing the Via Sacra (the Sacred Way), the most important street in ancient Rome where many triumphant processions took place. You will see the ruins of some ancient monuments as well as the Triumphal Arches of Titus and Septimius Severus, the Curia, seat of the Roman Senate, the Basilica Emilia and the Basilica Julia which were both used for business transactions.

Rome



You will also see The Vesta Temple with the house of the Vestal Virgins, and finally the Temples of Antoninus and Faustina, Vespasian and Saturn. During your visit to The Coliseum, the magnificent Flavian Amphitheatre, you will envision the gladiator duels, wild beast fights and naval battles which were arranged for the entertainment of the ancient Roman people. Entrance tickets to the Coliseum will be provided. The Arch of Constantine is visible from here as well. In the afternoon, you will have time to relax at an outdoor café or discover something new in the Eternal City. You may choose to visit the Trevi Fountain or the Spanish Steps. Campo Dei Fiori is also a lively spot with a wide choice of pubs and pizzerias. The Jewish ghetto and the Trastevere neighborhood are amazing spots as well. There is also Castel Sant'Angelo, where parts of the film Roman Holiday were shot. Overnight in Rome. B/G/ET/PD/H

Day 10 Roma Religiosa

Breakfast at hotel. At 9:00 a.m. in the hotel lobby, meet your private bilingual guide for a 3 hour tour which will begin with a visit to the Pio-Clementino Museum and will then move on to the visitation of The Vatican, The Sistine Chapel and The Vatican Museums. To save time, we will prearrange entrance tickets for you. The journey through the Vatican Museums will proceed through the Gallery of the Candelabra, the Gallery of Tapestries and the Gallery of Maps and from these Galleries, you will enter

directly into the Raphael Rooms, where you will observe the extraordinary frescoes executed by Raphael and the Sistine Chapel.

Vatican



The actual visit to the Basilica, the largest Christian place in the World, will include a viewing of the magnificent Pieta by Michelangelo, Bernini's bronze Baldacchino (canopy), and the throne of St. Peter. At the end of your tour, you may choose to visit the underground catacombs which house the remains of the popes. Enjoy the remainder of day at leisure. Overnight in Rome. B/G/ET/H

Day 11 Rome, Naples, Pompeii, Sorrento

Breakfast at hotel and check out. Enjoy the morning at leisure exploring Rome. Meet your private driver in the hotel lobby for transfer to the Roma Termini train station. Here you will board a high speed train to Napoli (1h 10 min). Upon arrival in Naples, your private driver will meet you at the beginning of your track, holding a sign with your name, for transfer to your hotel in Sorrento (1h drive). On your way to the Coast, you will stop in Pompeii for an unforgettable experience among the ruins of this ancient city.

Pompei



There you will meet your private guide for a tour of the ancient ruins. You will be personally guided through the stone streets of a city built over 2,000 years ago. Upon arrival, you will be magically transported into antiquity. In Pompeii, you will view homes in which mosaics and frescoes have been preserved despite the treacherous devastation sustained during the eruption of Mount Vesuvius on August 24th in the year 79 AD. We will prearrange the tickets for both visits, so you will skip the lines and enjoy your precious time.

After the tours, meet again your private driver for a transfer to your hotel in Sorrento. Check in and settle and enjoy time at leisure. You may choose to discover Sorrento's main square, Piazza Tasso, where there is a great little market area to sample artisan made Limoncello. You can do some great shopping there as well. Overnight in Sorrento. B/PT/TRTK/PD/ET/G/H

Day 12 Sorrento, Capri

Capri



Breakfast at hotel. You may opt to take the public ferry to Capri today for independent exploration. OR meet your private driver in the lobby of the hotel 9:00 am and board a semi-private boat for a leisurely ride to the upscale Island of Capri. You will circumnavigate the entire island and visit the most spectacular grottoes characteristic of the island, such as the Blue Grotto, Green Grotto, White Grotto, and around the famous Faraglioni Rock formations. Provided the seas are calm, you will be able to go into the Blue Grotto. A light lunch and beverages will be provided for you on board. By early afternoon you will dock at Capri and you will have time to independently visit the island or hang at the beach. Late afternoon return to Sorrento for overnight. B/H/semi-BR

Day 13 Sorrento, Amalfi Coast drive

Breakfast at hotel. At 9:30 a.m. in the hotel lobby, meet your private driver to enjoy a lovely day along the Amalfi Coast. Your journey will take you along the winding coast with stops in the quaint fishing village of Amalfi as well as the upscale resort town of Positano.

Positano



It remains one of the most upscale and vibrant towns in the fragrant Amalfi Coast. Peppered with colorful Mediterranean houses and pebbled beaches, many artists have fallen in love with Positano, including Steinbeck, Picasso and Escher. After enjoying time at leisure, return to Sorrento for overnight. B/PD/H

Day 14 Sorrento

Breakfast at hotel. Today is entirely yours in Sorrento. Sorrento will provide you with an opportunity to see how the locals live in the fragrant and vibrant Amalfi Coast. Located off the Bay of Naples, the city provides lovely views of the sea and of Mount Vesuvius. The myth of mermaids, known in Italy as 'sirene', took place here; Ulysses heard the Sirens' song as he was sailing past Sorrento. Perhaps do some

shopping today or relax poolside. Prepare for overseas flights. Overnight in Sorrento. B/H

Amalfi Coast



Day 15 Depart Naples

Breakfast at hotel and check out. Then meet your private driver in the hotel lobby for transfer to the Naples airport where you will board your flight back to the United States. Arrivederci, Bella Italia!! B/PT

CODES: B=Breakfast L=Lunch D=Dinner H=Hotel G=Guide ET=Entrance Ticket
PD=Private Driver PT=Private Transfer TRTK=Train Ticket BR= Boat Ride WT=Wine Tasting
PWT=Private Water Taxi CL=Cooking Lesson

Your custom Itinerary to Italy Includes the Following:

- 13 nights in hotels (4 star)
- 13 breakfasts
- 5 private bilingual certified guides (dedicated just to you and your family)
- 6 entrance tickets per person, skip the line (VIP)
- 3 private transfers
- 2 private water taxis in Venice
- 6 private drivers
- 3 train tickets per person, first class when available
- 1 semi-private boat ride to Capri
- 1 wine tasting with lunch
- 24/7 concierge service from Diana & staff