
**Northern Italy:
Tuscany, the Alps
& the Riviera**

LAND TOUR

Plus optional extensions in

Rome; Venice

NIT/NIP 2014

Grand Circle Travel
Northern Italy: Tuscany, the Alps & the Riviera
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1. PASSPORT, VISAS AND TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

Passport Required

You need a passport for this itinerary. Please take a moment to check if your passport meets all of these requirements. If not, you could be refused entry into a country. And if that happens, you might be required by that country to return to the U.S. immediately, **which would be at your own expense**.

Your passport should meet these requirements for this itinerary:

- It should be valid for at least 6 months after your scheduled return to the U.S.
- It should have the recommended number of blank pages (see below for details).
- The blank pages must be labeled “Visas” at the top. Pages labeled “Amendments and Endorsements” are not acceptable.

Recommended number of blank pages:

This recommendation is based on a “worst case” scenario. When you are on this adventure, you might use fewer pages, depending on the whims of the Immigration official on duty that day. Since the consequence of having too few pages can be severe—you could be denied entry into a country—we feel that it’s better to be safe than sorry, and we strongly recommend that you follow these guidelines.

- **Main trip and extensions:** 2 blank “Visa” pages.

If you need to renew your passport or get extra pages:

Contact the National Passport Information Center (NPIC) at **1-877-487-2778**, or visit their website at **www.travel.state.gov** for information on obtaining a new passport, renewing your existing passport, or for additional pages. You may also contact our recommended visa service company, PVS International, at **1-800-556-9990** for help with your passport.

NOTE: When updating your passport, it is worthwhile to check the prices on all the different services that might apply to you. For example, it might be less expensive to renew your passport than to have pages added, depending on the number of pages you need.

Visas Not Required

U.S. citizens do not need visas for this itinerary.

No U.S. Passport?

Non-U.S. citizens or non-U.S. passport holders: If you are **not** a U.S. citizen or if you possess a passport from a country other than the U.S., it is your responsibility to check with your local consulate or embassy about possible visa requirements. For your convenience, we recommend the services of PVS International. Or contact your local consulate.

PVS International
Passport & Visa Services
1700 N Moore Street
Rosslyn Center, suite 310
Arlington, VA 22209
Telephone: 1-800-556-9990

Backup Photocopies

The smartest security precaution you can take is to make photocopies of your passport's personal information pages, your air tickets, your traveler's check serial numbers (if you're using them), and your credit cards. Also, bring extra passport-sized photos. Make a list of the phone and fax numbers for reporting lost credit cards, your travel protection plan company (if you have an optional travel protection plan) and medical emergency network. Keep these documents separate from the originals, and they can save you immeasurable time, money, and trouble if your originals are lost or stolen as you travel. In addition, scan these photocopies and email them to your email address; you can then print out replacement copies if necessary.

2. YOUR HEALTH

Keep Your Abilities in Mind

We've worked closely with our local Program Directors and regional associates to identify the aspects of this adventure that you should be aware of, from physical requirements to cultural factors. **Please carefully review the information below prior to departing on this trip.**

Pacing

- 5 locations in 14 days, including 2 single-night stays

Physical Requirements

- Not accessible for travelers using wheelchairs or scooters
- Travelers using walkers, crutches, or other mobility aids must travel with a companion who can assist them throughout the trip
- You must be able to walk 3 miles unassisted and participate in 3-5 hours of physical activities each day, including stairs
- Balance and agility are required to board vaporetto (small ferry) in Venice. *Some of the transportation that you might take on your own (water taxis, gondolas) requires even more balance and agility.*

Altitude

- 1 full day at altitudes between 3,000-7,000 feet

Climate

- Daytime temperatures range from 51-89°F during touring season
- June-August are the warmest months
- March and November weather can be unpredictable and change quickly within a short period of time
- Expect strong, cold winds in the Dolomite Alps in April-May and September-October

Terrain

- Travel over uneven walking surfaces, unpaved paths, hills, stairs, and cobblestone

Transportation

- Travel by 45-seat motorcoach, 100-seat ferry boat, and vaporetto

Cuisine

- Meals will be based on the local cuisine

Health Check and Inoculations

If you have any ongoing medical conditions or concerns about your health, we highly recommend that you schedule a checkup with your personal physician at least six weeks in advance of your departure date. Discuss with your doctor any aspects of your international itinerary that may affect your health and be guided by his or her advice. A loose filling or developing cavity would be difficult to remedy while you are traveling. You may want to have a dental exam before your trip.

If you have a condition that requires special equipment or treatment, you must bring and be responsible for all necessary items related to your condition. If you take medications regularly, be sure to pack an ample supply that will last your entire trip, as obtaining refills of your medication can be difficult during your trip. Pack these medications in your carry-on bag, and keep them in their original, labeled containers. To be prepared for any unforeseen loss of your medications, you should also bring copies of the prescriptions, written using the generic drug name rather than a brand name.

Vaccinations

Check with the CDC: To ensure you receive any needed vaccinations we suggest that you check the current recommendations of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for the geographical region that you are going to travel. You can contact them:

- Online** — if you have access to the Internet, we suggest you visit the CDC's website at www.cdc.gov/travel, where you will find comprehensive information about preventing illness while traveling.
- By phone**—at the CDC's Hotline toll-free at **1-800-232-4636** 24 hours a day. Please note that automated information may be arranged topically by disease, rather than by country or region.

Consult your doctor: After checking the CDC's recommendations we strongly suggest that you consult your family physician (at least 6 weeks prior to departure) concerning any vaccinations or medications that you may need on this trip. At the time of print there were no specific vaccinations required for entry into any of the countries on your itinerary.

3. LUGGAGE REGULATIONS

Size, Number and Weight Restrictions

MAIN TRIP LIMITS	
Pieces per person	One checked bag and one carry-on bag per person
Weight restrictions	Varies by airline. The current standard is 50lbs for checked bags and 15 lbs for carry-on bags .
Size restrictions	Varies by airline. Measured in linear inches (<i>length+width+depth</i>). Generally, 62 linear inches is the checked bag limit; carry-on limit is 45 linear inches .
Luggage Type	A sturdy, fabric-sided suitcase with built-in wheels and lockable zippers is recommended.
TRIP EXTENSION(S) LIMITS	
The extensions have the same luggage restrictions as the main trip.	
REMARKS / SUGGESTIONS	
<p>One suitcase and one carry-on bag per person: Due to the space limitations on bus transfers, you'll be restricted to one suitcase and one carry-on bag per person. This is to ensure that we have room for everyone's luggage. We ask that you abide by this limit to avoid inconveniencing your fellow travelers and prevent additional airlines luggage fees (which are your responsibility). Most airlines now charge to check more than one suitcase per person for flights to Europe and other international flights.</p> <p>Note: Enforcement of published restrictions by countries and airlines is a matter of governmental and corporate policy. Enforcement may include spot checks and may be inconsistently applied. Expect penalties and fines to be imposed immediately, however, when and if enforced. Before you choose to ignore the published restrictions you should ask: <i>Do I feel lucky?</i> And, even if you answer yes, you should make sure that you have the ability to pay the fine.</p>	

Should I confirm luggage restrictions with my U.S./international airline(s) before departure?

Yes, you should still confirm your U.S./international luggage limits directly with the airline(s) a week or so before your departure. You should take this step no matter if your vacation has a lower limit than the average international flight or not. Why? Because there may be recent changes, such as new security regulations or an update to the standard weight/size allowance. For your convenience, we maintain a list of the toll-free numbers for the most common airlines on our webpage in the *FAQ* section

You should also check with the airlines on luggage fees—many airlines charge to check luggage, sometimes even on international flights. Most airlines will charge a fee if you check a second piece of luggage. Others will charge a fee if you bring a second carry-on item, like a purse or a laptop. **These fees are *not* included in your trip price;** they are payable directly to the airlines. If you are making a connecting flight, you should also confirm if your luggage can be checked through to your final destination. For more information about air travel, see the “Air Travel” section of your Important Information booklet.

Luggage Suggestions

Consider a duffel bag or soft-sided suitcase for your checked luggage. Due to space limitations on our motor coaches, you are allowed one piece of checked luggage per person. Porterage at airports and hotels is provided for **one** bag per person. All bags should have luggage tags.

Consider a daypack or small backpack as your carry-on bag. It will do double duty during excursions and walking trips. A daypack leaves your hands free and distributes its weight onto your back. Packed with daily travel needs (sweater, camera, rain/wind jacket, water bottle, etc.), it will compress to fit the storage space of foreign motorcoaches, and yet still have room for an impulse buy at a local street market.

Tip: Bring a second, empty lockable bag folded into your main suitcase, with a luggage tag and small lock. Use this to carry souvenirs home – but remember that you may incur extra luggage fees. If you're traveling with a companion we recommend "cross-packing," i.e., pack 2 outfits of your clothing in your companion's luggage and vice-versa, in case one bag is delayed.

Airport Security/TSA

Restrictions on what can be included in your carry-on luggage may change. To avoid inadvertently packing restricted items in your carry-on, we suggest that you consult the Transportation Security Administration website at www.tsa.gov/public, which keeps a current list of restricted items. From the main website click on *Our Travelers*, then *Air Travel*, and then you will see a link for *Prohibited Items*.

Liquids and your carry on: Follow the **TSA's 3-1-1 rule:** Liquids must be in a 3.4 ounce or less (100ml) bottle (by volume); all bottles must be in a 1 quart-sized, clear, plastic, zip-top bag; 1 bag per passenger placed in screening bin. One-quart bag per person limits the total liquid volume each traveler can bring. The 3.4 ounce (100ml) container size is a security measure.

Locking your luggage:

To reduce the risk of damage to your luggage, *either* do not lock your bags when checking in for flights that originate in the U.S. *or* use TSA-approved locks. (These are locks that TSA screeners can open and relock with a special tool, avoiding damage to your luggage or lock if a physical inspection is required. Look for the words "TSA" or "TSA-approved" on the lock's packaging.) Outside of the U.S., we strongly recommend that you lock your luggage as a preventative measure against theft.

4. WHEN YOU ARRIVE

Your GCT Program Director

During your Grand Circle Land Tour, your group of up to 42 travelers will have reliable assistance available at all times from an onsite Grand Circle Travel Program Director. Your Program Director is fluent in English and can give you an inside perspective on your destinations. Your Program Director is supported along the way by local tour guides, who guide you expertly through particular sites and cities.

Many Grand Circle Program Directors are graduates of professional education programs for travel guides. In addition, they receive specialized training directly from Grand Circle, training that is based on what we've learned from thousands of past travelers about how to make the trip most enjoyable. Your Program Director offers both a deep knowledge of the region and a commitment to make this a very pleasant, informative, and rewarding travel experience for you.

Your Program Director will provide sightseeing tips, handle all travel details, reserve optional tours you choose to take, oversee your Discovery Series events, and provide any other assistance you may need. You will be in the company of the Program Director throughout your Escort Tour. If you choose to take the optional trip extension in Venice, you will also have the assistance of a Grand Circle Program Director. During the optional trip extension in Rome, you will have the services of Grand Circle's Hospitality Desk Representatives to help you make your stay in that ancient city memorable.

GCT Air Travelers

U.S. Departure: If you are among a group of ten or more GCT travelers who depart the U.S. from your international gateway city, it is our goal to have a GCT Representative assist you at the U.S. airport with the check-in of your flight. Unless there are extenuating circumstances beyond our control, the Representative will be at the check-in counter three hours before your departure time. If you are flying domestically before your international flight, the representative will be stationed at the check-in counter for your departing international flight, not at the domestic arrival gate.

Arrival in Italy: At the beginning of your main trip or your optional pre-trip extension, a GCT Representative will meet you at the airport after you exit Customs and escort you to a private motorcoach for your transfer to the hotel. If you are not met upon arrival, we ask that you immediately call our emergency contact at +39-345-9124-799 for assistance.

Important note: *On arrival, you must take your luggage off the baggage carousel, carry it or use one of the available carts, which you then will move through customs. (You'll need a one- or two-euro coin for the carts found in Italian airports. You may need to change US dollars to euros—exchange offices are usually close by -- and then use a local change machine to get 5 one-euro coins for a 5 euro note.) When you exit customs, you'll handle your cart until reaching your motorcoach. Your motorcoach driver will load your luggage onto your motorcoach.*

U.S. Return: At the end of your base trip or optional post-trip extension, you'll be transferred by water taxi to the airport for your return flight to the U.S. If you are among a group of ten or more GCT travelers who return to the same U.S. gateway city, a GCT Representative will meet you as you exit Customs and help you find taxis, buses, hotel accommodations, or connecting flights. Again, it is our goal to have our GCT Representative waiting to assist your group. In rare instances, unforeseen circumstances may prevent this service.

Grand Circle Travel is not responsible for flight delays or cancellations. In the unfortunate circumstance that your flight is delayed or changed, please try to reach the GCT local contact in order to make new arrangements for your transfer. Due to airline regulations our staff are not notified of flight rerouting, and our airport representative won't necessarily be aware of your new arrival time. In these cases you will need to arrange your transfer by taxi to your hotel.

Flying with a Travel Companion

If you're traveling with a companion from a different household, and both of you are beginning and ending your trip at the same airport on the same dates, let us know you'd like to travel together and we'll make every effort to arrange this (please note, however, that this is not always possible). If you request any changes to your flights, please be sure that both you and your companion tell us that you still want to fly together.

Please note: *If you plan on booking your own international flights or arranging with our air department to arrive/depart on an earlier/later date than standard for your program, airport transfers will NOT be included in your program price. Transfers must be purchased separately, as an optional add-on, and are subject to availability. To learn more, or purchase airport transfers, please call our Traveler Support team at 1-800-321-2835. For more information, please see your Important Information booklet.*

IMPORTANT – AIRPORT TRANSFERS: Travelers who chose to arrange their own airport transfers should keep in mind that your tour ends in Venice, where most transportation is by water. You'll have a few options:

- One option is to take a water taxi. Water taxis generally need to be pre-booked and are for a specific number of people. Your hotel should be able to help you book a taxi, but you'll want to make your reservation no later than a day or two before you leave Venice. You WON'T be able to join Grand Circle's water taxi at the last minute. We need a "head count" early on to arrange the water taxi, so we can only take the travelers who have booked their international flights with us or who bought an airport transfer from us in advance.
- Water taxis can be expensive. At time of writing, Trip Advisor estimated the cost to be 80-125 euros (about \$100-\$160). There are two lower cost options: a shared water taxi, known as "Airport Link" or "Bucintoro Viaggi" and the Alilaguna ferries.
- The ferry is usually the most cost-effective option, but it can be slow and is on a fixed route that only picks up passengers in certain locations. The shared water taxi costs more than the ferry, but is considerably less expensive than a private taxi—usually about a third of the cost. For more information check a good guidebook or go online to www.alilaguna.it (Alilaguna ferries) or www.venicelink.com (Airport Link).
- **No matter which option you chose, the dock might not be directly in front of your hotel.** Depending on where the dock is, you might need to walk several blocks from your hotel to with your luggage.

5. MONEY MATTERS

How to Carry Your Money

The European financial infrastructure is as developed and modern as America's – sometimes even better developed. Currencies vary and banks have different names, but most are allied with global institutions and offer the same services you use daily. You can expect to have ready access to ATMs (to get local currency from your account), to have major credit cards accepted at most popular tourist sites, restaurants, and major stores, and to exchange US dollars for local currencies. There will be localized exceptions and perhaps some limitations on availability and amounts, and don't forget the fees. However, a little forethought can make juggling currencies a fairly painless process.

While there is no need to obtain local currency before your trip, many travelers do exchange \$50 to \$100 or so into the currency of their first destination. This can smooth your arrival should you run into closed banks/exchanges or broken ATMs. Otherwise, rely on a mix of credit/debit cards and ATM use (for ready access to cash) as the best way to manage your money as you travel. U.S. cash should be mixed into the blend, but it's wise to minimize how much you carry. Just as at home, carrying large amounts of cash can be risky.

You can exchange money at money exchange offices and some hotels. A few banks will also offer this service, although many are cutting back on this service or only offer it to clients who have accounts with them. Be aware, however, that torn, dirty, or taped U.S. bills will *not* be accepted for exchange. **New** (in terms of use *and* issue date – post 2004) and large bills (\$100) will *usually* be accepted by banks and onboard ships; **old** \$100 bills (again, in age and condition) will *not* be accepted. Money in smaller denominations is much more universally accepted, but even there, new bills are preferred. Note that U.S. currency is not an accepted form of currency in Europe.

TIP: Our Program Directors would like to remind you that the money exchange offices at the airport may be convenient, but you pay for that convenience—the exchange rates are better in town. It is up to you to decide if you'd rather wait and find somewhere with a better rate or if you'd rather change your money at the airport, which could save you time.

Traveler's checks—not recommended: We urge you not to rely on traveler's checks for your personal expenses. They can be difficult to exchange and the commission fee for cashing them is quite high. It's most practical to view any traveler's checks you might bring as a last "cash" resort in the event of a special situation.

U.S. dollars have an advantage over traveler's checks. Cash is more readily exchanged and accepted, and sometimes commands a better exchange rate.

Credit Cards

Though major American credit cards (American Express, Visa, and MasterCard) are accepted abroad, always inquire if your type of credit card is accepted before deciding on your purchase. It is also wise to notify your credit card company that you will be using your cards abroad so that they may remove any security block. When using a major credit card you may receive a different exchange rate than if you pay with cash; inquire about the rate first. Please be aware that credit cards might not be accepted for small purchases or in some restaurants or stores. Note that the Discover credit card is not widely accepted outside the U.S. Keep your receipts in case you have questions about the conversion or exchange rate. Also, keep your receipts as proof of purchase for items to be shipped home.

TIP: Many credit card companies and banks have fraud alert departments that will freeze your card if they see suspicious charges—such as charges from another country. To avoid an accidental security block, it is a good idea to notify your credit card company or bank that you will be using your cards abroad. You can do this by calling their customer service number a week or two before your departure. You should also double-check what phone number you should call if you have a problem with a card while you are abroad. Don't assume you can use the 1-800 number printed on the back of your card—most 1-800 numbers don't work outside of the U.S.!

IMPORTANT NOTE: European countries have been phasing in a new type of credit card technology, called a “smartcard” or a “chip-and-PIN” card. These cards have an embedded computer chip instead of a magnetized strip, and the card owner authorizes a purchase by entering a four digit numerical PIN (Personal Identification Number) instead of signing a slip. Some businesses in Europe have already switched to the new system completely; some can process both smartcards and regular cards; and some haven't switched at all.

This new technology is not common in the U.S., so occasionally there may be machines that can't read U.S. cards. Or the machine can read the card, but asks for a PIN. Although it is not common for U.S. credit cards to have PINs (and some providers will not even be able to provide one at all), requesting one prior to your departure is recommended. In some shops you will still be able to sign a slip as usual if you inform the vendor at the point of sale. And if the shop in question requires a smartcard, you can always try a different form of payment, like a debit card or cash. (U.S. debit cards usually have a PIN, so sometimes they work when credit cards don't.) Since there is no way to predict in advance what each shop will do, we recommend that you bring more than one type of payment when you go shopping. For example, a mix of a couple different credit cards, a debit or ATM card, and some cash is ideal—you'll be prepared for anything.

Please note: Optional tour payments made by credit card may take up to 3 months to process. For this reason we ask that you use a credit card that will not expire until three months following your trip. Because our headquarters are in Boston, charges may appear to be from Boston or might be labeled as “OPT Boston” (depending on your credit card company).

Debit cards: Debit cards are very popular in Europe, and are widely accepted, but will *almost always* require a PIN. Many U.S. banks offer a combined ATM and debit card. Check your ATM card, and if it has a Visa or a MasterCard logo, ask your bank if it can be used as a debit card in Europe. (If there's no logo, then you probably can't use it as a debit card, but your bank will know for certain). If it can be used as a debit card, all you'll need is the same PIN you use at the ATM.

ATMs

When traveling, typically PLUS, Cirrus, and other bank networks are available throughout large cities and small towns. Always notify your bank before you leave home that you are going abroad so that they may remove any blocks on your account, and also ask them about the number of withdrawals you may make abroad. For cash withdrawals, don't forget to memorize the actual digits of your card's 4-digit PIN (Personal Identification Number), as many keypads at foreign ATMs do not include letters on their numeric keys, they only display digits. Many banks have begun imposing a fee ranging from \$1 to \$5 every time you use an ATM in a foreign city. You may want to limit the number of withdrawals that you make. Your Program Director/Hospitality Desk Representative can advise you on locations, but when to exchange money is left to your discretion.

Currency

The euro is the official currency of Italy. Euro banknote and coin denominations are as follows:

- Banknotes: 5, 10, 20, 50, 100, 200, and 500
- Coins: 1, 2, 5, 10, 20, and 50 cents; 1 and 2 euro

There is no need to obtain local currency before your trip (except as noted above). Please note that torn, dirty, or taped bills are generally not accepted for exchange.

Currency exchange rates fluctuate daily. Your Program Director will advise you of the exchange rate upon your arrival. For current exchange rates, please refer to our website, or the financial section of your newspaper. On our website select the region and then click on the country you'll be visiting. A link to the currency converter is included in the menu on the page of each individual country.

Banking Hours

Bank hours are usually Monday through Friday, 8:30 am to 1:30 pm, and 3 pm to 4 pm; banks are closed on Saturday and Sunday. A few banks will exchange money, although many are cutting back on this service or only offer it to clients who have accounts with them. In Italy, money can be changed not only at banks, but also at CAMBIOs (Exchange Offices), General Post Offices, and some travel agencies and hotels. Any of these businesses (including a bank) may charge a commission for the service. You will need to have your passport with you to exchange money.

Shopping

There is **no** requirement to make a purchase during stops at local shops or markets, and any purchase made is a direct transaction with the shop in question, subject to the vendor's terms of purchase. **Grand Circle Travel cannot be responsible for purchases you make on your trip or for the shipment of your purchases.**

Whether it refers to high fashion or Maserati automobiles, "Made in Italy" has become synonymous with style and quality craftsmanship. Among the most popular buys are leather goods, silk ties, knitwear, gold jewelry, ceramics, straw goods and other handicrafts, small cabinets, and jewelry boxes. Each region in Italy has its specialties:

- **Rome:** Designer fashions, silks, artwork, religious items, leather goods, and quality sunglasses.
- **Florence:** Jewelry, suede and leather goods, straw and raffia products, paper goods, handmade lingerie, and embroideries.
- **Santa Margherita:** Lace and handicrafts made from slate, a regional stone.
- **Bolzano:** Thun ceramics (a famous Italian brand that originated in Bolzano; their angel figurines are particularly popular). Many handicraft shops can be found in the town center.
- **Venice:** Glassware, lace, velvet and damask, Carnival masks, silver products, and silks.

Bargaining is **not** common in Italy. Prices in all shops are fixed and include taxes. Shops are generally open Mondays through Saturdays from roughly 9 am to 7:30 pm (individual stores will vary). In small towns they may close a few hours from lunch; in large towns or cities they may stay open at lunchtime. Some shops are closed on Sundays and Monday mornings during the winter months, while they are closed Saturday afternoons and Sundays during the summer months.

We recommend that wherever possible you carry your purchases home with you, especially if they are valuable or fragile. (Remember to leave some extra space in your luggage when you are packing for your trip, so you can fit in your vacation purchases.) If you plan a major purchase, we strongly recommend that you research the prices and quality available at home before your trip. Just one visit to an import shop or gold dealer will put you way ahead when you go shopping. This is the only way to know if you are getting a good price.

Rome

Rome is a shopper's delight, no matter what your budget. As mentioned before, the best buys are leather products of all sorts, from gloves to handbags and wallets to jackets; silk goods; fashions; and high-quality knitwear. Shops are closed on Sunday and on Monday morning; in July and August, they close on Saturday afternoon as well.

Antiques: For prints, scout the stalls at *Piazza Fontanella Borghese*; at Casali, *Piazza della Rotonda* 81a, at the Pantheon; and *Tanca*, *Salita de' Crescenzi* 10, also near the Pantheon. For a stunning array of antiques, browse *Via dei Coronari* and other streets in the *Piazza Navona* area. Some of the most prestigious antiques dealers are located in and around *Via del Babuino*.

Boutiques: *Via dei Condotti* (directly across from the Spanish Steps) and the streets running parallel to and crossing *Via dei Condotti* form the most upscale shopping area in Rome. Prices are high on *Via dei Condotti*. Lower-price fashions and goods may be found at shops on *Via Frattina* and *Via del Corso*.

Shopping Districts: Romans do much of their shopping along *Via Cola di Rienzo* and *Via Nazionale*. Big new shopping malls have cropped up on the outskirts of the city. *Cinecitta Due* is easiest to reach; just take Metro A to the *Subaugusta* stop. It has 100 shops, as well as cafés and snack bars.

Religious Articles: St. Peter's is the place to go for such items. They are plentiful in the stores around St. Peter's, on *Via di Porta Angelica* and *Via della Conciliazione*, and also in the souvenir shops tucked away on the roof and at the crypt exit in St. Peter's itself.

Department Stores: These are less atmospheric to shop in, but depending on what you are looking for, can offer good value. There is a fairly broad selection of women's, men's, and children's fashions and accessories at the *Rinascente* stores on *Piazza Colonna* and at *Piazza Fiume*, and at the *Coin* department stores on *Via Cola di Rienzo*, *piazza Alessandria*, and on *Piazzale Appio* (near *San Giovanni Laterano*). The *Ovviessè* chain has shops all across the city that offer medium-quality, low-price goods.

Venice

Popular buys include glassware, lace, velvet, carnival masks, silver products, and silks. Venice's main shopping district is the area directly surrounding and west of *piazza San Marco* or in the adjacent *Mercerie* that leads to the *Rialto Bridge* to the north. Most shops are open from 9 am to 1 pm. They close for a long lunch, reopen around 3:30 pm, and remain open until 7 or 7:30 pm.

Note on Venetian glass: *This attractive glass is a seductive item, but not all of it is of high quality, or even of local manufacture. Do a bit of comparison-shopping first, and know that real Venetian glass is seldom inexpensive.*

U.S. Customs Regulations and Shipping Charges

For all things related to U.S. Customs, the ultimate authority is the U.S. Bureau of Customs & Border Protection. Their website, www.cbp.gov has the answers to the most frequently asked questions. Or you can call them at **1-877-227-5511**.

The top three points to know are:

- At time of writing, your personal duty-free allowance is \$800 for items brought with you. Items totaling more than \$800 are subject to duty fees.
- **Items shipped home are always subject to duty when received in the U.S.** Even when the shop has offered to include shipping and duties in the price, this typically means shipping to the nearest customs facility and payment of the *export* duties—not door-to-door shipping or payment of the *import* duties. All additional duties or shipping charges would be your responsibility. Unless an item is small enough to send by parcel service (like FedEx), chances are you will need to arrange shipping or pick-up once the item is in the U.S. and will need to pay customs duties.
- It is illegal to import products made from endangered animal species. U.S. Customs & Border Protection will seize these items, as well as most furs, coral, tortoise shell, reptile skins, feathers, plants, and items made from animal skins.

U.S. Bureau of Customs & Border Protection
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20229
Tel. **1-877-227-5511**
www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/

Problem with a Purchase?

The best way to address a problem with a purchase is to not have one in the first place! So don't forget to examine merchandise before paying for it, check contracts or agreements before signing, and review your receipt before leaving the shop. For major purchases, don't hesitate to ask in advance about the return policy—local practice may vary from U.S. standards, so don't assume that you have a certain number of days after the purchase to speak up.

But what if you do discover an issue with an item later on? In that case, your best recourse is to contact the vendor directly. For this reason we recommend that you keep a copy of all your receipts, invoices, or contracts, along with the shop's contact information. If the shop in question was a scheduled stop during your adventure, Grand Circle can assist you by putting you in contact with the vendor. Expect that any resolution will take longer than it would in the U.S. due to delays in communication, the complexities of international shipping/customs duties, and even cultural differences in how business is conducted.

TIP: Our Program Directors point out that US-style returns policies are virtually unheard of in Italy. Usually you can only bring an item back if there is a defect or damage that clearly was not of your doing. And even then, the shop will usually offer to replace the item, not give money back.

To Tip or Not to Tip?

Sometimes *that* is the question. The good news is twofold: we're fresh out of Shakespearean soliloquies, so no thesauri will get hurt here; and the answer to the question "**to tip or not to tip** (and how much to tip if you so choose)" is *always* a personal decision. Tipping is a common practice both at home and abroad and we offer these guidelines to answer requests for appropriate tipping amounts. It can be useful to have this information on site – when the question *must* be answered – and ahead of time for travel budgeting purposes. Tips below are quoted in U.S. dollars; tips can be converted and paid in local currency (usually preferred) or in U.S. dollars (personal/traveler's checks should *never* be used for tips).

GCT Program Director: It is customary at the end of your trip to express a personal "Thank You" to the Grand Circle Program Director or the hotel Hospitality Desk Representative, especially if he or she has provided you with individual assistance. We recommend \$4-\$6 per person, per day. Please note that tips for our Program Directors can only be in the form of cash, and local currency is appreciated.

Airport/Hotel/Pier Portage & Transfers: If you are using GCT transfer services, tips to hotel, airport, and pier porters are included in the cost of your trip.

Local tour guides and drivers: \$2 per person for each half-day tour; \$3 per person for each full-day tour.

Included Group Meals: Your Program Director will tip waiters for the included meals when the group dines together.

Public Restrooms: Most public restrooms in Italy are manned by a local staff that takes care of cleaning and supplies. It is customary to leave a small tip for the staff—about EUR .50 per person. Some restrooms are pay-toilets; you pay the staff at the entrance to the restroom or drop the appropriate coin into the slot on the stall door. Prices range from EUR .50 to EUR2.00 per single use. Many restaurants, cafes, and shops offer only pay-toilets or expect you to make a purchase before using the facilities.

Time at Leisure: During the times that you explore independently, you may dine in a local restaurant, take a taxi, or avail yourself of some other service where tipping is customary. In Italian restaurants, tipping is often included in the price; look for the words "*servizio incluso*" in the menu or bill. If tipping is not included, a tip of 10% to 15% is customary. In addition, you may see the word "*coperto*" on your bill. This is not a tip, but more of a cover charge for the use of the table, table cloth, napkins, etc.

Taxi drivers don't expect tips, either – but a 10% tip for helping you with heavy luggage is appreciated. If the doorman calls a cab for you, no tip is expected; if he helps you with your bags on arrival or departure, a few euros per bag will be appreciated.

6. PACKING FOR YOUR TRIP

In General

Travel light. A good rule of thumb is to gather together everything you want to bring; then take half of that. Eliminate all but the essentials and start packing a few days before you leave. That way, you'll have time to think—not fret—about what you might be forgetting. To have a varied travel wardrobe yet keep your luggage light, we recommend you select a color scheme and pack color-coordinated clothing items that can be mixed to create different outfits. The lists below are suggestions of commonly useful travel items – what you choose to travel with will represent your own needs.

Pack casual clothes. Comfortable, low-key apparel is acceptable at each of your destinations. Basic pants, shirts, walking shorts, sportswear, everyday dresses and skirts, supportive shoes, and functional outdoor clothes that are relatively easy to care for are recommended. At dinner, although it is customary for men to wear long pants (not shorts), you will not need to don “dressy” clothing; men do not need jackets or ties and women do not need fancy dresses. You may want one or two “smart casual” outfits for the Welcome Reception or Farewell Dinner, but it's completely up to you. You would only need nicer dress if you plan to dine at a deluxe city restaurant on your own or attend the opera.

Comfortable, supportive walking shoes: These are essential. Italy's magnificent ruin sites, churches, museums, and shops truly invite exploration by foot. But walking on the country's cobblestone streets and rather uneven sidewalks can be a challenge—even for the most surefooted traveler.

Rain gear: Regardless of your month of travel, rainfall is certainly a possibility. We suggest you bring a folding umbrella and waterproof shell. Water-resistant walking shoes are advantageous in case heavy downpours pass through.

Proper attire in churches: To satisfy dress codes for Italian churches, men and women are requested to cover their shoulders and legs. No shorts above the knees or sleeveless garments please. Male visitors to the St. Peter's Basilica and Sistine Chapel in Rome will not be allowed entry unless they are wearing full length (ankle) pants. Men should also remove their hats inside a church. Women wearing sleeveless blouses can cover their bare arms with a scarf. It is not necessary for women to cover their heads or wear dresses/skirts; trousers, jeans, or pantsuits are fine. If you are traveling in cooler months, when it's unlikely that you'll want to put on shorts, the church dress code might not be an issue. However, if it's apt to be “shorts weather” when you travel, we suggest you pack a pair of light trousers and modest knee-length shorts to wear on days when church visits are featured. Women have the option of slipping on a long skirt with an elastic waistband over their shorts.

Packing Your Carry-On

Using a daypack as a carry-on bag for your flights is a smart solution. We **strongly urge** you to pack your carry-on with at least one full change of clothes, your camera gear, medications, changes of socks and underwear, your important travel documents, and other irreplaceable items, in case your checked bags go astray. Store camera gear and important papers in plastic bags to protect them from dirt and moisture. With a daypack you can then remove these items on arrival and load your bag with the gear you'll need on walking tours and excursions.

What not to pack: do not pack aerosol cans, and avoid packing glass bottles; use plastic containers instead. Leave at home checkbooks and any credit cards not essential for your trip, valuable jewelry, and anything that you would hate to lose.

Clothing Options

The luggage weight and size restrictions imposed by travel realities today have made traveling light an absolute necessity. With modern fabrics – Gore-Tex, Polarfleece, polypropylene, etc. – lightweight packing for comfort and protection through a wide range of weather is easy. A visit to any on-line or local sporting goods/outdoor stores (L.L. Bean, REI, EMS, etc.) will yield a treasure trove of lightweight, specialized, and fashionable clothing and gear that is readily adaptable to your itinerary and highly functional.

Travel Gear Suggestions

Though it's often fun to do things as the locals do, it can be frustrating when daily necessities or conveniences from home aren't available. To travel wisely these days you must juggle your personal needs and preferences against the physical constraints of your transportation—whether it's an international airplane, a transfer motorcoach, a small ship or a day-long trek on a camel. You'll have to distinguish between what you **must** have, what you'd *like* to have, whether you can zip your suitcase closed, and what you can reasonably expect to wrestle through the security checkpoints. Consult the list below to create your personal checklist – ignoring what you don't need and making the tough decisions on borderline cases. Remember that many airlines today will charge you extra for added luggage.

General Clothing Recommendations

- Causal shirts or blouses, plus trousers and/or jeans: Comfortable and loose-fitting so you can easily participate in the tours or be active.
- Shoes and socks: Comfortable, sturdy, highly supportive walking shoes or sneakers are recommended. Many of the places you visit have cobblestone streets. Also recommended is a pair of water-tolerant footwear in case of rain. Waterproof footwear is especially recommended for the extension in Venice.
- Underwear and sleepwear
- Light sweater. During colder times of year, this is useful for layering. During hotter times of year this can still be useful because the air-conditioning on the bus can be cold.
- Some sort of rain gear—a raincoat, a waterproof jacket, an umbrella, etc. Rain can be expected any time of year.
- Wide-brim hat or visor for sun protection.

Seasonal Clothing Recommendations

Weather and Altitude: *During your trip you will stay in Bolzano for four nights, in the Dolomite Alps region. Up in the mountains, temperatures can drop quickly due to altitude and weather changes – during any season of the year. No matter what season you travel in, we recommend that you bring a variety of layers to accommodate the altitude and any cold weather you may encounter.*

For winter (December-February)

- You'll mostly want long-sleeved shirts, plus a couple of short-sleeved ones for the Italian Riviera.
- Snow is common in Northern Italy this time of year, so factor that into your footwear choice.
- Warm outer gear is a must. This means a winter coat, hat, and gloves. This will be especially useful in the mountains (Dolomites-Renon-Innsbruck), which is colder than any other location on the trip—at freezing or below freezing.
- Bring clothing you can layer (sweater, fleece, jacket, etc.); thermal or long underwear adds warmth without bulk and doesn't take up much room in your luggage.
- In Venice you might face acqua alta ("high water"). This is when strong tides and other conditions combine to bring more water than usual into the city's lagoon. As a result, there can be flooding in some parts of town; waterproof footwear is a must.

For spring (March-May)

- Spring is especially tricky to define. March is a shoulder month that can have both winter and spring weather; May is a transitional month from spring to summer.
- It will be cool in the mountains (Dolomites-Renon-Innsbruck) and warm in Bolzano. You'll want a mix of long jeans/trousers and walking shorts, plus a mix of long- and short-sleeved shirts.
- Snow can occur as late as April in the mountains, so factor that into your footwear choice.
- Some warm clothing is still a must, but it doesn't need to be as heavy-duty as for winter.
- Layers (sweater, fleece, jacket, etc.) are key for this season, so you can adjust to the varied weather.
- A swimsuit will become more useful as spring progresses.

For summer (June-September)

- Summer is hot and muggy, so the best choices are walking shorts and/or lightweight trousers. But you'll still want a pair or two of long jeans/trousers for the mountains (Dolomites-Renon-Innsbruck) as it can be cool there all year.
- For female travelers: Our female Program Directors suggest that a skirt (to the knee or longer) is a great choice for hot days. There is no need to wear a skirt all the time; jeans/trousers/walking shorts are fine too, and are usually a better choice on our most active days. But a skirt allows for air movement and is a nice alternative to shorts.
- A swimsuit is recommended for the Italian Riviera as you might want to swim in the Mediterranean Sea. Keep in mind that hotels in Italy usually do not provide beach towels, so you might want to bring your own towel or a cover-up.
- A pair of sandals is also recommended.
- Late September may be closer to fall than summer.

For fall (October-November)

- As the season progresses, you'll want to lean more towards long sleeves and long trousers, but still keep a few lighter things for the Italian Riviera, where it will be warm.
- Snow can occur as early as late October in the Bolzano and Dolomites area, so factor that into your footwear choice.
- Like spring, layers (sweater, fleece, jacket, etc.) are key for this season, so you can adjust to the varied weather. As the season progresses, the more warm layers become useful.
- November is a transitional month into winter, especially in Northern Italy.
- In Venice you might face acqua alta ("high water"). This is when strong tides and other conditions combine to bring more water than usual into the city's lagoon. As a result, there can be flooding in some parts of town; waterproof footwear is a must.

Medicines

- Your own prescription medicines
- Vitamins
- Cold remedies: Sudafed/Dristan
- Pain relievers: Ibuprofen/naproxen/aspirin
- Laxatives: Senokot/Ex-Lax
- Stomach upset: Pepto-Bismol/Mylanta
- Anti-diarrheal: Imodium
- Band-Aids, Moleskin foot pads
- Antibiotics: Neosporin/Bacitracin

Consider ...

- Daily essentials: toothbrush, toothpaste, floss, hairbrush or comb, shaving items, deodorant, shampoo/conditioner, shower cap, body soap, etc.
- Washcloth (Italian hotels usually do not provide these)
- Spare eyeglasses/contact lenses and your prescription
- Sunglasses with a neck strap
- Sunscreen, SPF 15 or stronger
- Insect repellent with DEET
- Travel money bag or money belt
- Pocket-size tissues
- Moist towelettes and/or anti-bacterial "waterless" hand cleanser
- Photocopies of passport, air ticket, credit cards (as well as the originals)
- Extra passport-sized photos
- Written prescriptions for any medications

Other Gear

- Compact binoculars
- Toiletry bag with hook and pockets
- Hair dryer (provided in all hotels)
- Earplugs
- Hand-wash laundry soap (Woolite) clothespins/travel clothesline/stopper
- Electrical transformer & plug adapters—see "Regional Electricity" section
- Reading materials
- Travel journal/note pad
- Home address book/email address
- Photos, small gift for home-hosted visit
- Phrase book
- Collapsible walking staff
- Pocket calculator for exchange rates

7. REGIONAL CLIMATE INFORMATION

We can't predict the weather you'll have on your travels – our local weathermen are lucky to get tomorrow right! So, as your departure nears, it's a great idea to visit the *My Account* feature of www.gct.com for a current 10-day forecast of temperatures and conditions at your destinations. Or check Internet weather sites (www.wunderground.com is very comprehensive) for those forecasts and tweak your wardrobe accordingly. You'll find historical averages and general information on local climates below – but, given recent weather extremes, it's even more important to consult up-to-the-minute resources.

Tuscany: The climate in Tuscany is generally very mild with differences depending on the geography of each area. The weather is considerably milder year-round in Italy than in the north and central United States, but it isn't a region that's easy to categorize. The coast and valleys usually have hotter summers than the hills or mountains. April, May, October, have sunny days but the chances of rain are higher. Winter offers many sunny, mild days but nights are cold, particularly in hilly regions. July and August are generally the hottest months, while June and September offer warm weather without being too hot.

The Riviera: Protected from the cold north winds by the Maritime Alps and the Ligurian Apennines, the climate of the Italian Riviera has exceptionally mild winters and bright, hot summers, and lots of sunshine for most of the year. It rains rarely -- about 60 days a year, and even more rarely snows on the coast. Fall offers the high potential for stormy weather.

Italian Alps: In the Italian Alps, there are great differences between the climate of the valleys and the higher mountains. In winter, the valleys are frequently cloudy and foggy with persistent frost – and the average snowfall is 12 feet. By contrast, the mountains are relatively sunny, though actual temperatures can go as low as zero degrees Fahrenheit. In summer, conditions may be quite the reverse: the mountains shrouded in cloud by day and the valleys basking in warm, clear weather. Evening temperatures will always drop due to the high altitude. A *fohn* wind sometimes blows from the north and raises temperatures by as much as 25° and lowers humidity. **Note:** In the Dolomite Mountains, we strongly suggest that you bring a windbreaker/jacket and sweater or fleece with you as the tour will take you to mountain passes and alpine peaks where there can be sudden changes and drops in temperature even in summer.

Rome: (base and optional extension) The city of Rome, where you may extend your vacation for four more days, has a climate similar to that of Tuscany, with temperatures averaging in the 40s and 50s during peak winter months, and the 60s and 70s in spring and autumn. Winter rains can be heavy, but periods of sunshine are also common. Summer can be very hot, sometimes averaging in the 90s.

Venice (base and optional extension): Venice is situated in the flat, low-lying plains of northern Italy where the climate features year-round rain and sunshine, hot summers, and surprisingly cold temperatures during the three winter months. Thunderstorms can pass through in autumn and spring, though they are the exception and not the rule.

Here is the data from the weather observation stations closest to our destinations.

WHAT'S THE TEMPERATURE?												
<i>Average highs (taken at 2 pm) and lows (taken just before sunrise) in °F.</i>												
	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Rome (base and optional extension)												
High	55	57	60	64	72	78	84	84	79	72	63	57
Low	39	40	42	47	53	60	65	65	60	54	47	41
Florence, Italy												
High	49	53	60	68	75	84	89	88	81	69	58	50
Low	35	36	40	46	53	58	63	62	58	51	42	37
Santa Margherita, Italy												
High	57	59	59	64	71	78	84	86	80	73	66	60
Low	48	48	50	51	57	64	69	69	68	60	55	51
Bolzano, Italy												
High	43	49	58	66	74	80	85	83	77	66	52	44
Low	22	28	35	42	49	55	59	58	52	42	32	24
Venice (base and optional extension)												
High	42	47	54	61	70	77	81	81	75	65	53	44
Low	30	33	39	46	54	61	64	63	58	49	40	32

Please note: The data cited here reflect *climate* as opposed to *weather* conditions, and serve only as general indicators of what can reasonably be expected. A 60 degree *average* high temperature means that days may be as warm as 80 or as cool as 40 – but it's most likely you'll encounter temperatures in the 50 to 70 degree range.

8. TRAVEL AND TECHNOLOGY

In General

Smartphone, tablet, digital camera/camcorder, MP3 player: travel today can involve technology that didn't exist even five years ago. The usefulness of digital devices is enormous: smartphones can keep you connected and offer up-to-the-minute information via your cell plan or a local Wi-Fi connection. With a tablet (or smartphone) you can store multiple country guidebooks, access maps and connect to the internet in a small, lightweight device. (*Tip: you can download **this** document from the Grand Circle Travel website and import it into your tablet or e-reader, many of which can display PDF files.*)

Compact and lightweight, digital camcorders and cameras take high definition movies and still images of the people you meet and places you visit. For robust use a laptop may be effective; for occasional use it's wiser to rely on Internet cafes or a tablet and hotel Internet access rather than shoulder the heft and size of a laptop. To use these devices you should first consider the services available at your destinations. You'll encounter a range of electrical standards, varied plug configurations to access the local current, erratic availability (electricity and internet access), and differing technological standards.

You'll need to assess your power and data storage needs, and the accessories required to recharge/connect/use these devices. Finally, it's smart to read the owner's manual *before* you depart. Pay particular attention to electrical, power and storage requirements to ensure that you understand exactly what you need. Thorough preparation is the best guarantee that your devices will work up to their potential.

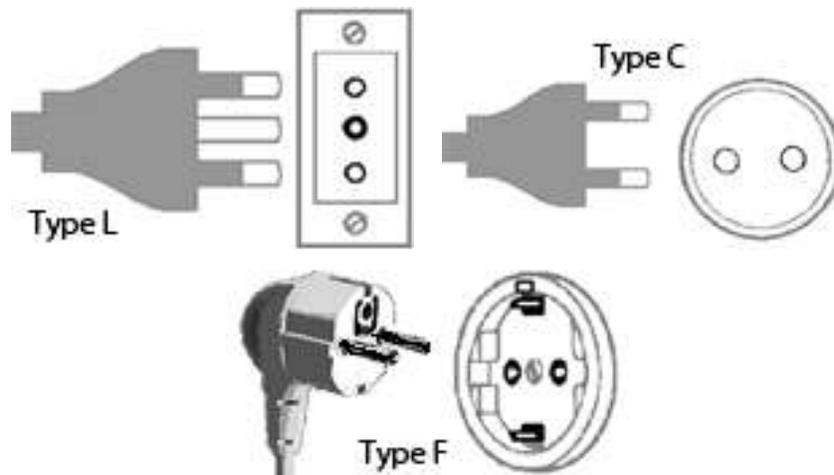
Regional Electricity

The standard U.S. electrical system — 110V 60Hz current and flat two- or three-pronged polarized plug system — is rare elsewhere. The overwhelming choice for the rest of the world is 220-240V and 50/60Hz current with a variety of plug shapes, sizes, and configurations. Some plugs will work with multiple receptacles, while others won't. Europe is largely standardized to the Type C "Europlug."

Plugging a 110V U.S. appliance into 220/240V 50/60Hz service will ruin the motor. We suggest that you bring *dual* voltage appliances (widely available) that work on both 110 and 220/240 voltage. Dual voltage appliances are inexpensive and need only plug adapters.

If you bring 110V appliances, such as a hair dryer (note that hotels often supply hairdryers and coffee makers) or shaver, you'll need a transformer (to halve the 220/240V current) in addition to plug adapters. Regional transformer/adaptor kits can often be found at hardware or online stores but transformers tend to burn out, so it might be better to leave those larger items at home.

The electric current in Italy is 220 V AC, 50 Hz. If you bring small American appliances, Italy uses Type C, L and F plugs and receptacles that fit them, so bring a variety of adapters and a transformer for the 220V current in order to operate them.



**Italy uses two variants of the Type L (3 prong with distinct diameters).
The Type C *Europlug* and Type F are also commonly found.**

Because you'll need various plug types on this trip, it may be a good idea to invest in a versatile and lightweight all-in-one, universal adapter/converter combo. If you use multiple digital devices—cell phone, digital camera, and MP3 player for instance – it's also handy to have a travel power strip, perhaps with a surge suppressor and USB-style port for charging cell phones, MP3 players or e-readers without the use of device-specific plugs.

Smartphones

It will require some effort to get the most out of your smartphone when you travel. Even with an international roaming plan, costs can add up quickly – those handy apps often pile up download fees. The simplest solution is to shut down all cell phone functions, automatic data feeds and roaming options, and take advantage of the apps via available Wi-Fi. With an Internet VOIP app (like Skype) you can make inexpensive calls. If necessary, turn international roaming back on and your phone will work as usual – albeit at some cost. If your phone doesn't support international roaming (most smartphones do), some carriers offer loaners.

Cell Phones

If you want to use a standard cell phone while traveling overseas, be sure to check with your service provider (www.verizon.com, www.t-mobile.com etc.) to see if your phone will work outside the U.S. or whether you're better off renting an international phone. The websites www.travelcell.com and www.globalcellularrental.com have good information on rentals. Or, consider buying an inexpensive local phone for your stay.

Phone Calling Cards

If you don't carry a phone, you can use a prepaid calling card to call the U.S. with minimal additional charges. Besides the prepaid long distance charges, you might have a local fee of a few cents and possibly a connection fee if you are using your card at a hotel. Check with the reception desk prior to using it to avoid unexpected charges.

Calling cards purchased locally are usually less expensive than those purchased in the U.S. and are more likely to work with the local system. Note that dialing a U.S. 1-800 number outside the continental United States will incur costly long distance fees, since 1-800 does not work outside the U.S.

Photo Gear

For many people, capturing the highlights of their travel experiences in photographs or movies and sharing them is one of the most enjoyable aspects of the journey. Remember, however: some individuals and cultures are less tolerant of photography than others. It's always best to respect local customs. And in some places you may be charged for photography at specific sites, or restricted from any photography at all.

Digital cameras and camcorders are excellent travel companions—and many do dual duty by recording movies *and* still images. Fist sized camcorders can capture HD movies and high quality still photos; cameras the size of a deck of cards are great for snapshots and casual movie clips. With an ample supply of high-capacity memory cards you can record your whole trip with a small, lightweight package.

But you must remember the batteries. Recharging batteries is sometimes impossible, cameras can drain batteries *very* quickly, and replacements may be unavailable. Whether you need standard or proprietary batteries, it's good to have spares. Be sure your charger will work with the local electrical system, and bring more than enough memory cards—they may be hard or impossible to find. Memory cards are small, thin and light: you can never have too much storage.

Compact cameras are impractical for distant subjects. Some models have a zoom lens of up to 120mm, which is good for middle distances. For distant subjects a *megazoom* (with a zoom lens of at least 300mm) or a single lens reflex (DSLR) camera with up to a 300mm telephoto lens are good choices. With a DSLR you can use multiple lenses, though your gear can quickly get complex, weighty and cumbersome. Cameras or lenses that need a tripod are impractical for travel photography. A single mid-range telephoto lens coupled with a small, fast prime lens (for low light/no flash situations) is an effective, flexible and compact kit. Consider mirrorless interchangeable lens cameras (MILC), which combine small bodies and multiple, small lenses with high quality for both still and HD movie images.

If you use a DSLR or MILC camera, protect the lenses with a UV filter and bring lens caps, covers, cleaning paper and a waterproof bag (a heavy duty Ziploc-style bag is good) to protect your gear. Be sure your camera has a flash that you can turn off, and if it's detachable, remember to pack it. (At many sites and museums, flashes are *not* permitted.)

Consider disposable cameras, as well. They are inexpensive and capable of acceptable photos as long as the light is not too dim or bright. X-rays do not damage the data of digital cameras (in any media format), and so pose no problems for travelers using digital cameras.

9. ABOUT YOUR DESTINATIONS

We're including some handy practical details and a brief introduction to the places you'll visit on your Land Tour. If you expect to explore in depth on your own, we recommend that you consult one of the many available book-length guides to your destinations. If you have one or two specific sites, museums or features that you're interested in, an Internet search is the ideal way to get-up-to-date information and details. And of course your Grand Circle Travel Program Director or Hospitality Desk Representative will be able to assist you with suggestions and arrangements of activities you wish to participate in during your stay.

Cuisine

The ancient Romans were the originators of the first fully developed cuisine of the Western world. Drawing on an abundance of fine, natural ingredients from the fertile Roman countryside and influenced by Greece and Asia Minor, they evolved a gastronomic tradition still felt in kitchens the world over.

Traditional Italian cooking is quite like the Italian people themselves—robust and hearty. Popular ingredients include any combination of tomatoes, garlic, olive oil, onions, celery, parsley, seafood, parmesan cheese, mozzarella cheese, chicken, and, of course, every type of pasta, from spaghetti and fettuccine to penne and ravioli. Seasonal vegetables include yellow, red, and green sweet peppers; eggplant; mushrooms; green and broad beans; zucchini; asparagus; and artichokes.

Drinking Water

Water in Italy is considered safe, but as an added safety precaution against possible stomach upsets, we recommend you drink bottled water as much as possible. Pure mineral water is sold everywhere in 33 centiliter and 1½-liter clear-plastic bottles. Other choices for water is mineral soda (carbonated mineral water). If you're out of bottled water, hotel tap water is okay to drink, but it may taste unpleasant because of heavy chlorination.

Hotel Courtesy

Italian hotels do not allow food and beverages to be taken from their breakfast rooms, nor is it courteous to eat or drink food or beverages purchased elsewhere in hotel common rooms. In conformity with municipal laws to promote urban decorum, hotels do not allow hanging laundry on room balconies. Travel clotheslines, used in your bathroom, are a more private and effective solution.

Laundry Service

Your Program Director or concierge can assist you with making arrangements for these services.

Rome in Brief—Optional Extension

City Layout and Details

Via del Corso is Rome's principal street. It runs north to south with easy-to-remember landmarks at its end points. At the north is *piazza del Popolo*, with a central obelisk and trio of churches. East of *piazza del Popolo* (and north of *piazza di Spagna*) is *Villa Borghese*, the city's principal park.

Off of *Via del Corso*, about two-thirds of the way between *piazza del Popolo* and *piazza Venezia*, is *Via Condotti*, which runs east to *piazza di Spagna*—the Spanish Steps area. This is the city's chic shopping area. The southern extremity of *Via del Corso* is *piazza Venezia*. You cannot miss it because it is dominated by the massive *Vittorio Emanuele Monument*, called by locals either “the wedding cake” or “the typewriter.” Southeast of *piazza Venezia* are the Roman Forum and the Palatine Hill (the centermost of the seven hills of ancient Rome) and, more distant, the Colosseum.

To the west of *piazza Venezia* and stretching toward the river lies Old Rome, an area of narrow winding streets, aging buildings and, generally, excellent restaurants and charming cafés. *Corso Vittorio Emanuele* is the main boulevard in this neighborhood. Across the Tiber (*Tevere*) River is Vatican City and farther south is the mellow *Trastevere* district—for many people the most interesting and colorful corner of the city.

Evening Entertainment

As mentioned before, the *International Herald Tribune* is now printed in Rome and is available at most newsstands; it often lists major events in Rome, as well as the rest of Italy, in its Saturday “Weekend” section. Issues are usually one day behind the *Tribune*'s original publication date.

In addition, the monthly *Carnet di Roma*, available at EPT tourist offices, is free and has an exhaustive listing of scheduled events and shows. The bi-weekly pamphlet *Un Ospite a Roma*, free from your hotel concierge if available, is another source of information, as is *Wanted in Rome*, available at newsstands.

If you want to go to the opera, ballet, or to a concert, it's best to go online and buy your tickets before you leave home. Advance tickets are especially important at famous or well-known theaters because their events can sell out early. If you prefer to be spontaneous, you might have luck trying for a last-minute ticket—some venues will sell off any remaining seats the day of the performance. You can also try licensed shops or third party ticket booths. At smaller venues you might be able to get tickets at the box office just a few days before performances. Here's a brief preview of entertainment possibilities:

Opera: The *Teatro dell'Opera* is on *Via del Viminale*.

Film: There are two English-language movie theaters in Rome. One is the *Pasquino* (Vicolo del Piede, just off *Piazza Santa Maria* in *Trastevere*). The other is the *Quirinetta* (*Via M. Minghetti*, 4—*Centro storico*). The daily film program at each theater is listed in Rome's daily newspapers.

Concerts: The new Concert Hall complex opened in 2002. It is called simply New Auditorium—*Nuovo Auditorium* (*Viale Pietro de Coubertin*) and it features a wide variety of classical, symphonic, and contemporary music on schedule.

Night Clubs: The best source for an up-to-date list is the weekly entertainment guide “Trova Roma,” published in the Italian daily *La Repubblica*.

Local Transportation

Perhaps the best way to sightsee on your own is to pick a part of the city or a specific sight that you especially want to see, go to it on the bus or Metro, then explore the area on foot. Remember: Many Roman pathways are cobblestone. Before setting out, be sure to don good walking shoes, preferably with thick rubber soles that will cushion your feet. Transportation route maps are sold at newsstands and ATAC information and ticket booths.

Metro: Rome's subway is called the Metropolitana, or Metro for short, and provides the fastest and easiest means of transportation in the city. The Metro begins operating at 5:30 am, and the last train leaves each terminal at 11:30 pm. (**Line A**, however, closes at 9 pm from Sunday to Friday; on Saturday it closes at 1:30 am. Also, service interruptions may occur in conjunction with the construction of the new **Line C**. Your Program Director will update you on schedule changes or limitations.) A big letter M indicates the entrance to the subway. Tickets, which are good on buses as well, are available from vending machines at all stations. But you can avoid standing in line at stations if you buy single tickets or books of five or ten ahead of time at newsstands and tobacco shops.

The Metro has two underground lines: **Line A—distinctive color RED**—goes from the Battistini Station to the Anagnina Station. Important stops on this line are the Cipro Station near St. Peter's and the Vatican Museums, the Spagna Station (the Spanish Steps), the Termini Station, and the San Giovanni Station (the Basilica of St. John the Lateran). **Line B—distinctive color BLUE**—connects to Laurentina, stopping at piazza Bologna, Stazione Termini, via Cavour, the Colosseum, Circus Maximus, the Pyramid of C. Cestius, St. Paul's Outside the Walls, and E.U.R. The A Line intersects with the B Line at the Termini Station, which is also Rome's central train station.

Bus: Silver/orange, silver/green ATAC city buses (and several streetcar lines) run from about 6 am to midnight, with intermittent *notturmo* services on main lines throughout the night. Tickets are sold singly or in books of five or ten at tobacco shops and newsstands. When boarding a bus, remember to enter at the rear and exit at the middle.

Make sure you stamp your bus ticket: When you step onto the bus, you must stamp your ticket in the ticket machine. Any passenger whose ticket is not stamped faces a hefty fine!

Taxis: As in most cities, this is the most expensive way to get around. You can hire a taxi at a taxi stand or arrange for one over the telephone. The concierge can reserve a taxi for you, however you should be aware that the taxi's meter begins running the minute the driver accepts the call. Use only the official white cabs, and be very sure to check the meter. There are supplements for service after 10 pm; for pickup from the central train station; and on Sundays and holidays. It is customary to tip the taxi driver approximately 10%.

Venice in Brief—Optional Extension

City Layout and Details

Venice is about two and a half miles from the Italian mainland and one and one quarter miles from the Adriatic Sea. The city is built on and around 117 islands and islets, separated by 177 small canals. These small land clusters are joined together by some 460 bridges. The three largest and most historically significant bridges are the Rialto, Accademia, and degli Scalzi, each of which crosses the Grand Canal. The city has only one main piazza—San Marco—and it bustles all day long. Most visitors are primarily interested in seeing San Marco, with its St. Mark's Basilica and Doge's Palace, but there's much to see elsewhere if you are game for walking. Shoppers will want to explore along the Mercerie, which leads out of the piazza San Marco and serves as the city's major shopping artery. It eventually leads to the Rialto, site of the market area.

The city is divided into six quarters, called *sestieri*, and these include San Marco, Santa Croce, San Polo, Castello, Cannaregio, and Dorsoduro. Each has its own mood and appeal. The Dorsoduro, for example, has been compared to New York's Greenwich Village. Don't expect to find any order to the tiny streets and winding canals that comprise each sestieri. Street numbers do not follow a logical sequence, and finding a specific address can be baffling. Looking for certain cross streets and posted signs can be more helpful than trying to pinpoint an address by its street number. Regardless of your orientation skills, however, expect to get at least a little lost at some point while exploring on your own. Everybody does—that's part of the charm of Venice.

Across the lagoon from Venice proper is the shoestring island of Lido. This long, narrow sandbar protects Venice from the force of the Adriatic Sea; it is also one of Italy's most fashionable beach resort areas. Venice is connected to mainland Italy via a three-mile bridge that runs from the city across the Venetian Lagoon to the town of Mestre.

Evening Entertainment

Compared to Rome, Venice is a quiet city that shuts down pretty much by 9 pm. Typical nighttime entertainment includes classical concerts (often featured in various churches), opera performances, art exhibitions, leisurely visits at cafés and bars, and sunset strolls. The tourist office and some hotels distribute the free weekly pamphlet *Un Ospite a Venezia* ("A Guest in Venice"). It is a useful multilingual booklet that lists up-to-date museum schedules, special events, entertainment programs, and other activities, as well as the current rates for gondolas and motorboat taxis.

Local Transportation

There are no cars in Venice, except on the Lido. To get around, you can walk, or take a vaporetto or gondola. Remember, Venice has 460 pedestrian bridges.

Vaporetti: These motorboats operate as public waterbuses. An *accelerato* boat makes every stop; a *diretto* makes only express stops. They operate from designated piers and run about every 15 minutes. Service is frequent from about 7 am to midnight, then hourly between midnight and 7 am.

Gondola: If you opt for a gondola ride, first agree on the price and the length of the trip. Two major stations at which you can hire gondolas include piazza San Marco and Ponte Rialto. *TIP: In 2014, the official price for a 30 minute gondola ride was set as 80 euros.*

On foot: By far, the easiest way to explore Venice is on foot. All the locals walk, too. Because the city has 460 bridges with stairs, bicycles are impractical.

Motorboat Taxis: A ride as short as 10 minutes can cost upwards of \$60. Given the small distances of Venice, use of water taxis is a very expensive proposition that can be easily avoided with a little forethought or scheduling.

10. DEMOGRAPHICS & HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Italy

Area: 116,348 square miles

Capital: Rome

Languages: In addition to Italian, many of Italy's natives speak French and English. In the Southern Tyrol region (Alps) German is common.

Location: Italy lies in southern Europe, bordering France in the northwest, the Ligurian Sea and the Tyrrhenian Sea in the west, the Ionian Sea in the south, the Adriatic Sea in the east, Slovenia in the northeast, and Austria and Switzerland in the north. The country includes the Mediterranean islands of Sicily and Sardinia and several other small islands.

Geography: From the mountains in the north to the island of Sicily, the geography of Italy varies widely – as does the climate, scenery and culture.

Lazio: (Rome) In central Italy, Lazio is one of the central Italian regions, and the one that encompasses Rome. It is comprised of about 25% mountains (inland) and 75% coastal plains or hill country. It is generically called the Roman *Campagna*. Rome itself is on the Tiber River, about 15 miles inland of the Tyrrhenian Sea – although the present city extends to coastal Ostia.

Tuscany: (Florence) The region of Tuscany is a blend of rugged hills, fertile valleys, and long stretches of sandy beaches that curve along the west coast of central Italy and fringe the pine-forested coastal plain of the Maremma. The cities and towns of Tuscany house the centuries-old heritage of culture and art that produced magnificent medieval cathedrals and the marvels of the Renaissance.

Liguria: (The Italian Riviera) Stretching from France to the west, Piedmont to the north, and Tuscany in the east, Liguria lies on the Ligurian Sea. This narrow strip of land sits between the sea, the Alps and the Apennines Mountains. This 200-mile coastline is a thin strip of rapid descents from the mountains to the considerable depths of the Ligurian sea. It features an enviable climate, but minimal access to the lovely Ligurian waters and only two significant harbors – at Genoa and La Spezia.

Trentino Alto Adige/Sudtirolo: (Bolzano) Trentino is among the rare Italian regions with no access to the sea. It is mountainous and includes the majestic Dolomite Mountains as well as many small, pristine lakes. Ruled by Austria for many centuries it is officially bilingual; German is prevalent in the northern region. It is well known for its wines, winter resorts, and the grandeur of its scenery.

Veneto: (Venice) Venice proper is in the coastal zone of the Veneto region – which borders other regions as diverse as the Trentino Alto Adige (and Sudtirolo), Lombardy and Austria proper at its northernmost corner. The region is comprised of about 30% mountains, with the Po River Valley making up much of the rest of the topography – including hills and the coastal region. Venice stretches across 117 small islands in the marshy Venetian Lagoon along the Adriatic, sited along the shoreline between the mouths of the Po (to the south) and the Piave (to the north) Rivers.

Population (2014 estimate): 61,680,122

Religion: Roman Catholic 98%, Other 2%

Time zone: All of Italy is on Central European Time, one hour ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (six hours ahead of Eastern Time). Summer hours operate from the last weekend in March until the last weekend in September.

Holidays:

01/01	New Year's Day
01/06	Epiphany
04/20	Easter Day
04/21	Easter Monday
04/25	Liberation Day
05/01	Labor Day
06/02	Founding of the Republic
08/15	Assumption Day
11/01	All Saints
12/08	Feast of the Immaculate Conception
12/25	Christmas Day
12/26	St. Stephen's Day

ITALY HAS A LONG AND COMPLICATED HISTORY. Its earliest recorded civilization dates back to around 2000 B.C., when the peninsula was settled by fair-complexioned Ligurians, ancestors of the Latins. Sometime near the 9th century B.C., boatloads of Greeks landed on Italian shores, and Italy became the site for the myth of Ulysses and other famous legends. The Greeks inhabited southern Italy and Sicily during the 8th century B.C., forming colonies of city-states called Magna Graecia. The Greek civilization prospered in the 6th and 5th centuries B.C., but waned in the 4th century B.C. While the Greeks were busy settling the south, the Etruscans, a highly artistic populace from Asia Minor, built strong communities in central Italy.

The Etruscans ruled until the Roman revolt around 510 B.C. By 250 B.C., the Romans had conquered Italy and established Rome as the seat of their empire. Julius Caesar reigned throughout the 1st century B.C., and his defeat of France made Rome the ruler of the entire Mediterranean world. Under Caesar, Roman culture flourished. Its unprecedented splendor was further enriched by Greek architectural and artistic influences. Caesar was assassinated in 44 B.C. and succeeded by his nephew Octavian, later known as Augustus, who instituted the Pax Romana, two centuries of peace during which the Roman Empire was as mighty as it would ever be. At the end of the 2nd century A.D., the Roman bishop was made head of the new Christian religion—a position that granted him enormous power in the political arena.

Rome's glory during the 200-year-long Pax Romana began to decline in the 3rd century A.D., when a succession of inept and corrupt emperors weakened the city. By the 4th century A.D., Rome had become very divided politically, and new administrative capitals were founded in such cities as Milan and Trier, Germany. In A.D. 395, Constantine moved the Roman capital to Constantinople (Istanbul), which left the city of Rome very vulnerable. During the 400s, it was repeatedly attacked by barbarians and in 475 completely fell to a barbarian chief, who soon after opened regions of Italy to Teutonic settlement.

Italy was briefly reunited in 800, when Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne Holy Roman Emperor. But over the next century, the country disintegrated into contentious kingdoms at constant battle for control of provincial lands. Italy's turmoil continued for an astounding length of time, as different city-states waged war after war up to the early 19th century, when Napoleon took over Italy.

Despite this internal dissension and strife, Italian society and culture reached its peak during the Renaissance in the 15th and 16th centuries. The independent city-states formed a delicate balance of power, and affluent patrons such as the Medici family of Florence greatly supported the arts. This golden age of human endeavor and artistic creation spawned some of the greatest painters, sculptors, and inventors of Western civilization—Leonardo da Vinci, a genius in many vocations, the epitome of the Renaissance man (1452-1519); Michelangelo (1475-1564); Raphael (1483-1564); and the architect Brunelleschi (1377-1466).

After Napoleon's series of invasions, the Italian people sought to squelch foreign domination, which gave birth to the movement for political unity in Italy, known as the *Risorgimento* (Resurrection). Italian nationalism gathered broad support under the popular leader Giuseppe Garibaldi, and Italy was finally united under King Victor Emmanuel II in 1870.

The country was ruled as a monarchy and joined the Allies in World War I. Benito Mussolini rose to power during the early 1920s and ushered in one of the darkest periods in Italy's history. Mussolini ("Il Duce") organized discontented Italians into the Fascist Party to "rescue Italy from Bolshevism"—but what he actually delivered was a totalitarian state controlled by the militia. Mussolini formed an alliance with Hitler and fought against the Allies during World War II. The Italian Resistance Movement fought Mussolini and the Nazis, but their reprisals took a heavy toll: 400,000 people were killed, hundreds of thousands were left homeless, and the economy was sharply disrupted. In 1945, Mussolini was captured in Milan by Partisans and executed.

Italy was declared a republic in 1946, but during the postwar era it was seriously divided by extreme political differences. Dozens of governments rose and fell. The leading parties were the diametrically opposed Centrist Christian Democrats and the Italian Communist Party. In the 1970s, a prolonged outbreak of terrorist acts by the left-wing Red Brigades threatened domestic stability, but by the early 1980s, the terrorist groups had been suppressed.

In the early 1990s, public discontent with the government intensified due to a soaring inflation rate and disillusioning scandals that involved the Mafia and many government leaders. In 1996, Italians elected a new government dominated by a center-left coalition for the first time since the proclamation of the Italian Republic. Italy adopted the euro as its currency in January 1999. The new bills and coins started circulating in 2002.

11. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Books, Maps, Movies & Websites

If your local store or library doesn't stock the books or movies below, the Internet offers a wide variety of options for finding older or rare stock – try AbeBooks (abebooks.com), Alibris (alibris.com), Amazon (amazon.com) or Barnes & Noble (bn.com) — or any of the smaller websites. Of course, this selection is not meant to be comprehensive, and is offered as a starting point for your personal research.

Atlas of the Roman World by Tim Cornell and John Matthews (History)

A compact yet thorough illustrated history of the rise, zenith, and decline of the Roman Empire.

History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire by Edward Gibbon (History)

A landmark scholarly work ever since it was written in the 18th century. Coverage extends from the 2nd century A.D. to the fall of Constantinople in 1453.

Julius Caesar: Man, Soldier, Tyrant by J.F.C. Fuller (History)

Insightful portrait of Caesar as a man, tactician, and leader.

History of Venice by John J. Norwich (History)

The author skillfully manages to compress 1,000 years of Venetian history into one book.

The House of Medici: Its Rise and Fall by Christopher Hibbert (History)

Portrays the Medici's personal lives and political squabbles, and captures the workings of Renaissance city-state politics.

The Italians by Luigi Barzini (Culture)

Barzini's classic book offers readers a refreshingly frank discussion of the history and culture of his homeland, past and present.

The City of Florence: Historical Vistas and Personal Sightings by R.W.B. Lewis (Culture)

A historic portrait with insight into the city's influence on modern Western Culture and its civil legacy from the Middle Ages. Includes commentary on the Arno, Duomo, Ponte Vecchio, Santa Croce, and other landmarks.

Italian Backgrounds by Edith Wharton (Travel Account)

Originally published in 1906, Wharton's travel diary still rings true in its depiction of the Italian people and culture.

Italian Hours by Henry James (Travel Account)

Travel essays by the famous 19th-century American novelist who absolutely adored Italy.

The World of Venice by Jan Morris (Travel Account)

A new edition of a classic that blends history, social commentary, and personal travel experience.

Within Tuscany: Reflections on a Time and Place by Matthew Spender (Travel Account)

Sculptor Matthew Spender, whose work was featured in the movie *Stealing Beauty*, captures the essence of the Tuscan people, art, and culture in this delightful travel narrative.

History of My Life by Giacomo Casanova (Memoir)

This 1997 translation of the great Venetian adventurer's epic memoir makes his action-packed story more accessible to the general reader.

Guidebooks:

Your Program Director Leader will be happy to provide recommendations and suggestions during the trip, so a guidebook is not a necessity. But a good one can be invaluable as a one-stop reference, so for those travelers who have asked for suggestions, we offer these guidelines. Since different guidebook series each have their own target audience and structure, it is well worth your time to browse your local library or bookstore to find the one(s) you like best. To get you started, here is some general information on the most popular series:

Culture Smart! – Focuses on local customs and etiquette instead of sights, dining, etc.

DK Eyewitness – Innovative visuals make these books easy to use and a nice souvenir once the trip is over. The focus is primarily on the sights and activities.

Fodor's – A classic guidebook with strong information on activities, shopping, and dining. Good mix of upscale recommendations and budget suggestions.

Frommer's – A comprehensive guide series that is known for its restaurant recommendations.

Insight – Offers more information on history and culture than usual, nice visuals, good maps.

Lonely Planet – Practical guides geared towards a more adventurous traveler on a budget.

National Geographic – From the same company that publishes the magazine. Excellent photographs, good information on history, nature, and culture.

Rough Guides – For the independent traveler on a budget. Particularly known for their maps.

Maps:

Most hotels will provide maps free of charge at the reception desk or in your room. These maps are usually sufficient for our travelers, but if you plan on any independent exploration, you may wish to consider purchasing a map before your departure. This can be especially useful in a country that doesn't use the Roman alphabet as the hotel maps may only be printed in the local language.

Some recommended map series include: Rand McNally international maps (especially the StreetWise series), Insight's FlexiMaps, and Rough Guide's destination maps. We suggest that you visit your local bookstore or library to get a better sense of which type of map is best for your needs before making a purchase.

Suggested Movies

Here are few of our favorite movies that are about, or set in, or from the region you'll be traveling. Most are available at movie rental stores and websites—or even your public library. Sometimes films produced outside of the US may be hard to find, but they are usually available online. Lists are highly subjective – and choosing the best of Italy's films in under fifty pages is a fool's errand. If your favorites are missing, start a chat with fellow travelers and you'll likely find even more treasured movies to share.

Italy

La Strada (Federico Fellini, 1954) starring *Giulietta Masina, Anthony Quinn*

Masina was tiny and had an almost clown-like face, like a female Charlie Chaplin. The plot is about a pair of circus performers who travel all over Italy, juggling in the street. Quinn's character is oblivious to the importance of his partner — in both life and work – until too late. One of great tragic love stories it's a lovely film that seems to define the magic of cinema.

La Dolce Vita, “The Sweet Life” (Federico Fellini, 1961) Starring: Marcello Mastroianni, Anita Ekberg
An engrossing social commentary, and one of Federico Fellini's masterpieces (though the competition is keen). It's a detailed panorama of Rome's modern decadence and sophisticated immorality, held tightly in focus by the detached, wandering protagonist through whom we see it all. (Other important Fellini films include *City of Women* and *8 ½*.)

The Bicycle Thief (Vittorio De Sica, 1949) Starring: Lamberto Maggiorani, Enzo Staiola
As it follows a man desperate to retrieve the stolen bicycle that is crucial to his family's survival, De Sica's film subtly examines the human condition, society, family, justice, and anguish in the poverty of post World War II Italy. It won an Honorary Academy Award for Best Foreign Language film in 1949. (De Sica's other important films include *Umberto D.*, *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis*, and *Two Women*.)

1900 (Bernardo Bertolucci, 1977) Starring Robert de Niro, Gerard Depardieu
Bernardo Bertolucci's epic history follows the lives of two friends (one a peasant, the other a land owner) born on the same day in Italy. Their lives unfold with vivid cinematography and lush imagery of the beautiful countryside. The movie jumps forward, to the end of World War I, and follows their story until 1945. At 5 ½ hours long, it rewards patience.

The Conformist (Bernardo Bertolucci, 1970) Starring Jean-Louis Trintignant, Stefania Sandrelli
The story of a weak man persuaded by Fascist secret police to assassinate his former university professor, a leading anti-Fascist. The film explores how a totalitarian state manipulates people and how people allow themselves to be manipulated. Technically, aesthetically, and visually, this is a rich film.

Open City (Roberto Rossellini, 1954) Starring Anna Magnani, Aldo Fabrizi
Filmed on bits and pieces of scavenged film, Rossellini started this movie as the Allies drove the Nazis out of Rome. The film looks improvised, but actors and screenwriters (including Federico Fellini) were pros. A classic war tale, its semi-documentary camera style and use of actual locations gives the film a very real feeling. The plot involves attempts by the Italian underground to smuggle money out of Nazi-occupied Rome to partisan fighters in the mountains.

L'Avventura (Michelangelo Antonioni, 1960) Starring Gabriele Ferzetti, Monica Vitti
One of the early experimental films in modern Italian cinema, this is one of the first thrillers where what happens is never revealed: a woman disappears on a Mediterranean island and is never seen again. Antonioni uses this as metaphor to imply the absence/disappearance of meaning in the lives of the surrounding characters.

Ossessione (Luchino Visconti, 1943) Starring Clara Calamai, Massimo Girotti
The first film based on the book *The Postman Always Rings Twice*. Set in rural Italy, it is an earthy exploration of human desire. The plot is the tale of a wandering tramp who has an affair with the wife of a restaurant owner. The two then conspire to murder her husband and attempt to live happily ever after. Often considered one of the first films of the Neo-Realism movement.

Pane, amore e fantasia (Luigi Comencini, 1953) Starring Gina Lollobrigida, Vittorio De Sica
A wonderfully innocent, sexy comedy set in central Italy in a backward and rural village. The plot is simple: a young woman is courted by a lot of admirers, including a local police chief, but the movie embodies the resilient Italian spirit, and plays to the clichés — spaghetti, sun, the cult of love, and feisty women — as it suggests the honest basis for those truisms.

Life Is Beautiful (Roberto Benigni, 1997) Starring Roberto Benigni, Nicoletta Braschi

The Jewish country boy Guido, a romantic in Mussolini's Italy raises a son in the shadow of fascism. He is determined to shelter his son from the evils around them, maintaining a ruse with comic ingenuity, even as the horrors escalate. Despite being a over the top in many instances, this is a moving and poignant tale of a father's sacrifice to save not just his young son's life but his innocence in the face of evil acts.

Summertime (David Lean, 1955) Starring Katharine Hepburn, Rossano Brazzi

A lovely Venetian travelogue-cum-love story with a plot that has Hepburn's spinster character falling out of character and in love with a married man. A deceptively simple romance, Hepburn brings her skills to the fore in a poignant characterization. It doesn't hurt that she's surrounded by the architecture, art, Italian conversation, music, and fine cuisine of Venice.

A Room with a View (James Ivory, 1986) Starring Maggie Smith, Helena Bonham Carter

From Merchant/Ivory and screenwriter Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, this adaptation of E.M. Forster's novel is a comedy of the heart, a passionate romance and a study of the repressions of Britain's manners and mores. The fascination here is with how Lucy (Carter) finally frees herself from those repressions. The film received eight Academy Award nominations, and won the Oscar for Best Adapted Screenplay, Art Direction, and Costume Design.

The Wings of the Dove (Iain Softly, 1997) Starring Helena Bonham Carter, Linus Roache

Another Helena Bonham Carter vehicle, based on the Henry James's novel of the same name. Set in London and Venice, it's a tale of passion, temptation and greed. Carter is Kate, a beautiful society woman whose desire for a lowly journalist offers an impossible decision: leave him, or marry — him and a life of poverty. Events take a twist when Kate befriends a lonely young heiress and discovers a secret that offers a tempting, but dangerous, solution.

Roman Holiday (William Wyler 1957) Starring Gregory Peck, Audrey Hepburn

The film that brought Audrey Hepburn to prominence in her first starring role. She's a European princess on an official tour of Rome who slips her handlers and goes on a spree, aided by Peck as a tough reporter. The locations are irresistible, and Hepburn establishes a chic style that would rule through the fifties. She won an Oscar, as did veteran costume designer Edith Head.

Ciao, Professore! (Lina Wertmulla, 1994) Starring Paolo Villaggio, Isa Danieli

A comedy from Lina Wertmulla, this is the tale of an upper-class teacher from conservative Northern Italy who finds himself teaching third-grade truants at a ramshackle school in the south. Along the way, the earnest "professor" becomes the student as he starts to see things through the fresh, vibrant eyes of his scrappy young students.

Tea with Mussolini (Franco Zeffirelli, 1999) Starring Judi Dench, Maggie Smith, Cher

A semi-autobiographical account of Zeffirelli's life in World War II Italy. Luca, Zeffirelli's character, is raised in Florence by his absent father's secretary among a group of British and American women, who must deal with the rise of fascism, the dangers of resistance, and weather dictatorial custody and betrayal.

The Great Beauty (Paolo Sorrentino, 2013) Starring Toni Servillo, Carlo Verdone, Sabrina Ferilli

Author, journalist, socialite, and wit—Jep Gambardella has been them all. But after his 65th birthday he ends up wandering the streets of Rome, taking stock of his life and his extravagances. Known in Italian as *La Grande Bellezza*, this film won the Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film in 2014.

Useful Websites

If you have access to the Internet, the following sites offer good travel information:

International health information: CDC (Centers for Disease Control)

www.cdc.gov/travel

Electric current and plug types

www.kropla.com/electric2.htm

Foreign exchange rates

www.oanda.com/converter/classic

ATM locators

www.mastercard.com/atm for **Cirrus ATMs**

www.visa.com/pd/atm for **PLUS ATMs**

Tourist information

www.italiantourism.com **Italy**

www.visiteurope.com/ **Links to countries**

www.inyourpocket.com/free-instant-city-guides.html

Travel books

www.amazon.com

www.barnesandnoble.com

World weather

www.intellicast.com

www.weather.com

www.wunderground.com

Foreign languages for travelers: basic terms in more than 80 languages

www.travlang.com/languages

Transportation Security Administration, for current luggage restrictions:

www.tsa.gov

Travel tips: packing light, choosing luggage, etc.

www.travelite.org

Net café guide: 100s of locations around the globe

www.cybercafes.com

U.S. Customs & Border Protection: traveler information

www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel

Transportation Security Administration (TSA): agency responsible for screening luggage in U.S.

www.tsa.gov/public

National Passport Information Center (NPIC): for passport information

www.travel.state.gov