
The Rivas:
France, Italy & the Isles

SMALL SHIP CRUISE TOUR

Plus optional extensions in
Aix-en-Provence, France
Torino & Lake Maggiore, Italy
Bologna, Italy

2015

Grand Circle Cruise Line

The Rivas: France, Italy & the Isles

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1. PASSPORT, VISAS AND TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

Passport Required

U.S. citizens need a passport for this itinerary. Please take a moment to check if your passport meets all of these requirements. If you are refused entry, you may be required 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 in good condition
- 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. On this trip you might use fewer pages, depending on the whims of the Immigration officials you meet. Since the consequence of having too few pages can be severe—you could be denied entry into a country—we opt for a better safe than sorry policy, and recommend these guidelines:

- **Main trip only:** You will need 2 blank “Visa” pages in your passport.
- **Pre- and/or post-trip extension:** No additional blank pages are needed for any of the extensions.

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

For U.S. citizens, a visa is not required for entry into France or Italy. If you are staying longer than 90 days in any of these countries, you should check with their embassy or consulate for the applicable regulations.

Traveling Without a U.S. Passport?

If you are not a U.S. citizen, or if your passport is from any country other than the U.S., it is your responsibility to check with your local consulate, embassy, or a visa services company about possible visa requirements. For your convenience, we recommend the services of PVS International, a national visa service located in Washington D.C.; they can be reached at 1-800-556-9990 or www.pvsinternational.org.

Backup Photocopies

The smartest and easiest security precaution you can take is to carry photocopies of the personal information pages of your passport, your air ticket, traveler's check serial numbers (if you're carrying these checks), and your credit cards. Store them separate from the originals. Bring along extra passport-sized photos. Add phone and fax numbers for reporting lost credit cards, for your travel protection plan company if you have purchased one and for your medical emergency network. This can save you immeasurable time, money, and bother if your documents are lost or stolen during your trip. In addition, you can scan these photocopies and email them to your personal email address so that a replacement can be printed out if needed (if/when Internet service is available.)



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 trip 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

- 15 days, with 7 nights aboard the M/V *Arethusa*, and 2 hotel stays

Physical Requirements

- You must be able to walk 3-5 miles unassisted and participate in 3-5 hours of physical activities each day, including several sets of stairs
- 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
- Balance and agility are required for boarding tender and 4x4 vehicle

Climate

- Daytime temperatures range from 55-90°F during cruising season
- June-August are the warmest months, with high temperatures and direct sunshine

Terrain

- Travel over uneven walking surfaces, including ruins and archaeological sites, unpaved paths, hills, stairs, and cobblestones

Transportation

- Travel by 45-passenger coach, train, 50- to 200-passenger public boat, 12- to 18-passenger ship tender, elevator, and 50-passenger small ship

Small Ship Cruising

- Throughout the cruising season, weather conditions and swells may affect your docking schedule

Accommodation

- The M/V *Arethusa* does not have elevators on board

Cuisine

- Meals will be a mix of regional specialties and familiar American standards
- Meals on board feature a variety of entrée options, including vegetarian

We reserve the right for our Program Directors to modify participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home if their limitations are impacting the group's experience.

Coastal Cruise vs. River Cruise

If you've been on a river cruise before, you might think that the activity level of this itinerary will be similar. But this coastal cruise is more rigorous than a typical river cruise. In order to set the right expectations, we'd like to take a moment to compare the two:

- The pace is faster on this Riviera cruise than on a river cruise, with more emphasis on the ports of call and less on scenic cruising.
- There's more walking—sometimes as much as 5 miles, which means up to two hours on foot. Plus, many of the towns along the Riviera and in Tuscany are hilly, so some of that walking is on an incline.
- There's more stairs in general and the ship does not have an elevator. At a minimum, you must be able to climb 2-3 flights of stairs unassisted in order to move about the ship. (Each flight has roughly 14 stairs.) Then there will be more stairs in town.
- Because you are on the sea, the motion of the ship is more noticeable. Rough seas are a possibility at any time of year, and some travelers may feel queasy or experience passing seasickness.
- We use public transportation in Florence, the Cinque Terre, Monaco, and other locations. This can be trains, local buses, or small ferries—the same ones locals use—so they may be crowded with nowhere to sit. Also, you may need to board or disembark quickly.
- The groups are smaller than most river cruises (25 travelers maximum, and only two groups on board the ship) so any “stragglers” will have a bigger impact on the group.

Seasickness

Most of the time our seas are calm and seasickness is not an issue. But since this itinerary is a coastal voyage on the Mediterranean Sea, and not a river cruise, seasickness remains a possibility—and one that you should be prepared for. There are a host of remedies available at your local drugstore: from over-the-counter medicines, to preventative medicated patches, and even bracelets that control nausea through pressure points. Do a little research and decide which method is best for you, then bring it with you on the trip. Even if you don't end up feeling seasick it is still worthwhile to have something on hand—better to be prepared and not need it, than to be miserable.

But if you forget your remedy of choice, there is a backup. The ship does have Dramamine available on board free of charge to help any travelers who need it. You can also combat mild seasickness by going to the top deck (the fresh air and seeing the horizon both help) and by eating certain types of foods like apples.

Health Check

Feeling healthy and confident of your mobility is essential if you want to fully enjoy your trip abroad. If you have 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. (You can use the “Keep Your Abilities in Mind” on the previous page as a guideline to discuss with him or her.)
- You may want to have a dental exam before your trip. A loose filling or developing cavity would be difficult to remedy while you are traveling.
- 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.

Vaccinations

At time of writing, there were no required vaccinations for France or Italy. (That is, neither of those countries require proof a specific vaccination in order to enter.) However, your doctor might feel that there are some basic vaccinations that you should have updated before you travel. Or there may be vaccinations that he or she recommends for you because of your personal medical history. We suggest you consult with your own physician at least 6 weeks prior to departure, and ask about vaccinations at that time.

If you’d like to know more about possible vaccinations for this trip—or just about health in general while traveling—the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is a great resource. You can contact them online or by phone.

- Online:** We suggest you visit the CDC’s website at wwwnc.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.

But please keep in mind that the CDC’s suggestions may not apply to you! For example, you might already have some of the vaccinations they routinely recommend. So be sure to ask your own doctor.

Prescription Medications

If you take prescription medications regularly, be sure to pack an ample supply that will last your entire 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.



3. LUGGAGE REGULATIONS & AIR TRAVEL

Luggage Limits

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 50 lbs 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?

Absolutely, confirm current restrictions about 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, because there may be recent changes, such as new security regulations, or an update to the standard weight/size allowances. For your convenience, we maintain a list of the toll-free numbers for the most common airlines on our website 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. 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.

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, which keeps a current list of restricted items.

Follow the TSA’s 3-1-1 rule for liquids: 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. Note that this rule is used increasingly throughout the world.

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.

Air Inclusive Travelers

If you have purchased international air with Grand Circle Cruise Line, there are some points that may be helpful for you to know.

- **U.S. Departure:** If you are among a group of ten or more GCCL travelers who depart the U.S. from your international gateway city, it is our goal to have a GCCL 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.
- **Overseas Arrival:** Once you arrive overseas, you'll need to collect your luggage and clear customs. A Grand Circle representative will meet you outside of customs and assist you with your transfer to the hotel or ship. **Important note on porters:** *Airport porters are NOT allowed in the baggage claim area. On arrival, you must take your luggage off the baggage carousel and load it onto a cart, which you will then move through customs. When you exit customs, you'll handle your cart until reaching your transfer vehicle. Your driver will load your luggage into the transfer vehicle.*
- **U.S. Return:** If you are among a group of ten or more GCCL travelers who return to the same U.S. gateway city, a GCCL 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 GCCL Representative waiting to assist your group. In rare instances, unforeseen circumstances may prevent this service.
- **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.

Airport Transfers

If you have purchased international air with Grand Circle Cruise Line and have not customized your dates of travel, then airport transfers are included in your program price.

If you will be booking your own international flights or will be customizing your travel dates with our air department, then 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**. You can also find more information online at www.gct.com/airporttransfers. **Please note:** *You must fly into or fly home from the same airport as Grand Circle travelers who purchased included airfare, and transfers are only available the same day that the group arrives or departs.*



4. MONEY MATTERS

How to Carry Your Money

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. Most banks, post offices, or exchange offices will want to see your passport at the time of exchange. It's more practical to view any traveler's checks you might bring as a last resort in the event of a special situation.

U.S. dollars not accepted for payment: You will not be able to pay with U.S. dollars in France or Italy; you will need euros instead. While there is no need to obtain euros before your trip, many travelers do exchange \$50 to \$100 or so before they arrive. This can smooth your arrival should you run into closed banks/exchange offices or broken ATMs. Once you are on the trip, you can withdraw euros from an ATM. You can also exchange money at some hotels, large post offices, and money exchange offices. To exchange money, you'll usually need your passport, bills in good condition (not worn, torn, or dirty); new bills (post 2004) are best. You can also exchange a small amount of money on board your cruise ship; see the "Onboard Ship" section of this chapter for details.

Carry a mix of local currency, an ATM card, and a credit card: You'll be well prepared if you plan on this combination for payments on your trip.

Local Currency

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.

France and Italy

The euro is the official currency of France and 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

Banking Hours

Many banks in Europe won't exchange money unless you have an account with them, but some still provide this service for everyone. If you can't find a bank, then a post office, hotel, or exchange office (bureau de change) is a good bet. Lastly, keep in mind that any place that changes money—banks included—may charge a commission fee.

- **France:** Banking hours in Paris are usually from 10 am to 5 pm, Monday through Friday. Throughout the rest of France, banks are usually open from 10am to 1pm, and 3pm to 5pm, Tuesday through Saturday. Banks often close earlier the day before a public holiday. **Note that banks in France usually do NOT exchange currency.**
- **Italy:** 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. To exchange cash you will need to have your passport with you. In banks there often is a special counter reserved for exchanging money. Many banks exchange money only in the morning; many do not exchange money at all or limit changes to bills of \$20 or more. In Italy, money can also be changed at CAMBIOs (Exchange Offices), general Post Offices, and some travel agencies and hotels—and since fewer and fewer banks are offering exchange services, these may be more convenient options, but they usually don't offer as good an exchange rate as a bank.

ATMs

Generally, the best, quickest, and safest way to get local currency is to use your ATM card. There are ATM machines in almost every place you will visit ashore.

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.

Note on ATM use: 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.

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 can 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.

Our Program Directors have asked us to remind you that even if your bank says that your debit card or credit card can be used in Europe that does not guarantee that it will work every time at every store.

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.!

Chip-and-PIN Cards

Many 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.

Discounts

As you explore on your own during this trip, don't forget to ask about senior discounts! Many museums in both France and Italy offer them; as do theaters and public transportation. In some places discounts are offered to anyone over 55 or 60—so it is worthwhile to ask even if you don't think you'd qualify. Also, don't forget about student discounts, which are very common in Europe. Usually, these aren't based on age, but do require a student I.D.; sometimes teachers or school staff with I.D. can also qualify.

Optional Tour Payments & Shipboard Expenses

Optional Tours

During your trip you will be able to book optional tours directly with your Program Director. He or she will ask you to confirm the payment for these tours by filling out a payment form. Optional tours can only be purchased with a credit or debit card. We accept Visa, MasterCard, Discover Card, or American Express credit cards only. (We also accept debit cards with the logo of one of these credit card companies, but it must be a card that allows you to sign for purchases.)

In order to process these charges, there can be a delay of 2-3 months from the date of your return for the charges to be posted to your account. Therefore we ask that you use a card that will not expire in the 2-3 months following your return. 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).

NOTE: Optional tours are subject to change. You can cancel your optional tour without penalty up to 24 hours prior to departure. If you cancel within 24 hours of departure, you may have to pay a penalty of 50% of the optional tour cost, because the tour may require a minimum amount of travelers in order to operate.

Shipboard Expenses

Credit card payments are accepted for shipboard expenses. We accept Visa, MasterCard, and American Express only for on board expenses. Debit cards, including debit cards with credit card functionality (i.e. those with a Visa, MasterCard, etc. logo) cannot be used for payment on board ship. Discover Card cannot be used for on board expenses, but can be used to pay for optional tours.

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 Cruise Line cannot be responsible for purchases you make on your trip or for the shipment of your purchases.**

France

Perfumes, fashion, jewelry, art, glass, china, and wine—these are just a few of the many goods for which France is famous. Each region has its own specialties, many of which make their way to Paris, the shopping capital.

Paris: The big department stores in Paris are excellent places to get an idea of what's available—or to spend an afternoon if your shopping time is limited. The biggest—and best—are *Galeries Lafayette* and *Printemps*, both on the Boulevard Haussmann, near the Opera and the Madeleine. The *Prisunic* and *Monoprix* chains have lower price and are more for everyday shopping (sort of like the French version of Target).

Or, if you're looking for something in particular, you can head straight to one of the specialized shopping areas. *Haute couture* can be found in the streets around the Champs Elysées: Av. George V, Av. Montaigne, Rue Francois I, and Rue de Faubourg St. Honore. The Rue de Paradis is lined with crystal and china shops, and St. Germain des Pres has more than its share of art galleries. The best and most expensive antiques dealers are along the Faubourg St. Honore on the Right Bank. For great flea markets, head to the Marche d'Aligre (at the Place d'Aligre) or the Puces de St. Ouen (near the Porte de Clignancourt)—but keep in mind that most flea markets are open limited hours or on the weekends only, so check the hours first. While bargaining is not common in France, it is acceptable at flea markets or occasionally at produce markets.

Nice & the Cote d'Azur: Shopping for both designer names and common brands is a popular pastime on the French Riviera. The plethora of shops range in atmosphere and price from very chic and expensive to down-to-earth and affordable. There is also a strong local emphasis, with plenty of products from the area available for sale, especially at the colorful open-air markets. In Nice, street market shopping in La Vieille Ville is the least expensive and perhaps the most fun. Rue Massena, Place Magenta, and Rue Paradis are the pedestrian zone of shops and cafés, with Rue Paradis noted for its elegant shops.

Monte Carlo and Cannes are world-renowned for their exclusive boutiques selling upscale fashion pieces, pricey jewelry, and all types of accessories. In Antibes and Juan les Pins, you can find everything from trinkets to high fashion.

Value-Added Tax: The French value-added tax (VAT) is typically 19.6% and can be as high as 33.33% on luxury articles. Depending on how much you spend on certain goods, you may be eligible for a partial refund of this tax. Ask the shopkeeper or salesperson at the time of purchase. Be sure to save all receipts for Customs. (Generally, you have to spend over 175€ at the same shop, on the same day, and have filled out a special form for this process.) Note that our ships do **not** have VAT forms.

Store Hours: French stores are generally open from 10am to 7pm Monday through Saturday, and are usually closed on Sundays. In smaller cities shop close at lunch time from 12:30 to 2pm.

Italy

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.

Just like France, each region in Italy has its specialties. Liguria is known for ceramics from the craftspeople of Albisola Superiore, ship models, handicrafts, and, of course, pesto. Local street markets and stores commonly have a wealth of offerings. Bargaining is **not** common in Italy. Prices in all shops are fixed and include taxes.

Marble: Since this area is not too far from the quarries in Carrara, you may find items made from marble, which make decorative and durable souvenirs. If you’d like to purchase marble, we have one word of warning: Occasionally travelers have had their marble souvenirs confiscated by airport security in Italy. (They claim it could be used as a weapon.) So when you return to the States, pack anything made of marble in your checked luggage instead of your carry-on. That way you won’t lose your marbles at security.

Counterfeits: In some cities you will find street sellers offering prestigious brands. These are fake products, and Italian laws make it illegal to buy from these peddlers. A fine of up to 2000 euro may be assessed if the police catch you buying one of these products.

Store Hours: Shops are generally open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 9 am to 1 pm; they close for lunch and re-open 4:30 pm to 7:30 pm. Individual stores might vary these hours. 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.

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.

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. 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.

Tipping Guidelines

Of course, whether you tip, and how much, is always at your own discretion. But for those of you who have asked for tipping suggestions, we offer these guidelines. To make it easy for you to budget, we have quoted the amounts in U.S. dollars; tips can be converted and paid in local currency or in U.S. dollars.

- **GCCL Program Director:** It is customary to express a personal “thank you” to your GCCL Program Director at the end of your trip. As a guideline, many travelers give \$7-\$10 per traveler for each day their Program Director is with them. *Please note that tips for your Program Director can only be in the form of cash, and local currency is appreciated. If you are taking any of the optional extensions, your Program Director during the extension(s) may not be the same as the one on your main trip.*
- **Shipboard Crew:** We recommend a flat tip of \$10-\$12 U.S. per traveler, per day. You’ll give this tip once—at the end of your cruise—and it will be pooled among the entire crew. For your convenience tips for the crew can be paid by credit card, in U.S. cash or in local currency.
- **Housekeeping Staff at Hotels:** We recommend \$1 per traveler, per day. (This is for hotels only; on the ship Housekeeping are part of crew, so you don’t need to tip them separately.)
- **Included in Your Trip Price:** Gratuities are included for local guides and motorcoach drivers on your main trip, extensions, and all optional tours.

Time at Leisure

When you are exploring on your own, it’s useful to know when to tip and how much, because local customs often differ from the U.S. Here are a few helpful guidelines for the most common services a traveler might use:

- **Taxis:** Tipping is not customary, but many locals will round up the fare and let the driver keep the change. If the driver helps you with heavy luggage, then 10% is a nice gesture.
- **Restaurants, cafes, and bars:** Throughout Europe, the tip for the waiter or bartender is usually included in the prices or added on as a service fee. Look for a statement on the menu like *service compris* or *servizio incluso* which means “service is included”, or for a service charge on the bill. If you would like to leave a tip on top of the service fee (or in the rare case when the service is not included) then 10% would be considered generous. In Italy, you may also 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.
- **Public Restrooms:** Most public restrooms in Europe have attendants that take care of cleaning and supplies. It is customary to leave a small tip for them—usually half of whatever currency is in use in that country (i.e. half a euro)—so hold on to those coins! 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. Many restaurants, cafes, and shops offer only pay-toilets or reserve their restrooms for patrons only.

NOTE: In France and Italy it is becoming increasingly difficult for local people to exchange dollars into Euros as fewer banks are offering exchange services. Therefore we suggest tipping in Euros if/when you can. (You’ll be able to get Euros through your bank at home, a local ATM, or an exchange office.)



5. PACKING FOR YOUR TRIP

In General

Just as no two people are the same, your packing needs aren't like anyone else's. The trick of packing is to bring only what you need to be comfortable – and only you can determine what answers that need. We've compiled some *suggestions* from our local Trip Leaders and from past travelers to help you refine your packing – and to ensure that nothing critical is forgotten.

Packing Light: The top two comments we hear from travelers about packing are “I wish I had brought less” and “I wish I had double-checked the weather.” 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 pants and shirts, skirts and blouses, or pantsuits that can be mixed to create different outfits.

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 online 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.

Pack casual clothes: Comfortable, informal apparel is perfectly acceptable at each of your destinations. Basic pants, shirts, sportswear, everyday dresses/skirts, supportive shoes, and functional outdoor clothes that are relatively easy to care for are recommended.

For This Trip

Plan to dress in layers on shore excursions: Be prepared for a variety of weather conditions: warm days with sun, chilly temperatures with showers, and evenings that could dip into the 40s or 50s, for the “shoulder” season. Onboard ship, as you cruise, it can be cooler than on shore. In November, evenings may even fall into the 30s. For warmer conditions, a mixture of cotton sweaters, sweatshirts, long-sleeved shirts, summery tops, pants, skirts, and walking shorts is recommended. Evenings call for a warm outfit and a heavy sweater or jacket. A sturdy windproof shell over a heavy sweatshirt, sweater, or fleece top is ideal for being out on deck at night. On land excursions, dress in layers. You can then easily adjust to any temperature shifts by removing or adding a layer. For possible showers, take a folding travel umbrella and/or rain hat. A waterproof jacket with a hood is ideal. Please note that the south of France can often be very hot in July and August, with average temperatures in the 90F range.

Comfortable, supportive walking shoes are essential: You'll be on your feet and walking a lot, sometimes over rough and slippery surfaces, so choose your footwear carefully. The soles of your shoes should offer good traction. You can find especially supportive or light hiking shoes designed for walking.

Light rain gear is recommended: Regardless of when you travel, rainfall is a possibility. While it may not rain on your trip, we suggest you bring a waterproof shell or coat, preferably with a hood. This is usually a better choice than a folding umbrella, which is less effective in wind.

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.

Travel Gear Suggestions

To travel wisely these days you must juggle your personal needs and preferences against the physical limits of your transportation—whether it's an international airplane, a motorcoach, or a river ship. You'll have to distinguish between what you must have, what you'd like to have—the question isn't "Can I close my suitcase?" but "Can I carry all of this through an airport?" Consult the following items to create your personal checklist – ignoring what you don't need and making the tough decisions over borderline cases. Remember that many airlines today will charge you extra for added luggage and may even charge to check one suitcase.

Our hotels/ships provide basics like soap and shampoo, but if you are sensitive to fragrances or new products, you may wish to bring your preferred brands. Most hotels do *not* provide a washcloth, so you may wish to pack one.

What not to pack: do not pack aerosol cans, as they tend to leak during air travel. 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.

Don't Forget: Emergency photocopies of your passport, air itinerary, and prescriptions, a list of your credit card numbers and phone number to reach the credit card company or bank to report loss or theft.

Clothing

- Shirts: short and long-sleeved in a breathable fabric, (cotton or blend.) Polo shirts are more versatile than T-shirts; sleeveless tops are optional.
- Light rain jacket/windbreaker with hood
- Shoes and socks: comfortable walking, running shoes, or light hikers
- Consider casual good-traction shoes, or sport sandals
- For cooler months (October-March): sweaters, fleece, warm jacket
- Pants/jeans: Comfortable and loose fitting is best for comfort and movement.
- Walking shorts: long cut for modesty
- Cotton sweater or sweatshirt for the air-conditioned bus
- Wide-brim sun hat or visor (seasonal)
- Swimsuit, for hotel pools
- Underwear and sleepwear

Consider ...

- Daily essentials: toothbrush, toothpaste, floss, hairbrush or comb, shaving items, deodorant, shampoo/conditioner, shower cap, body soap, etc.
- Spare eyeglasses/contact lenses and your prescription
- Sunglasses and a neck strap
- Sunscreen, SPF 15 or stronger.
- Insect repellent with DEET
- Compact umbrella
- Washcloth (not always supplied)
- Pocket-size tissues
- Moist towelettes and/or anti-bacterial "waterless" hand cleanser
- Passport, air ticket, credit card photocopies
- Extra passport-sized photos
- Moisturizer, lip balm
- Travel money purse, worn under your shirt or jacket; money belt

Medicines

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

Optional Gear

- Travel alarm or watch with alarm
- Compact binoculars
- Hanging toiletry bag with pockets
- Washcloth, handkerchiefs
- Basic sewing kit
- Hand-wash laundry soap (Woolite), clothespins/travel clothesline/stopper
- Electrical transformer & plug adapters—see “Regional Electricity” section
- Travel journal/note pad/reading material
- Home address book
- Photos, small gift for home-hosted visit
- Phrase book
- Collapsible walking staff
- Pocket calculator for exchange rates



6. 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.

By Destination

The Italian 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. As you'll be cruising, you also need to take weather on the water into account: it's often cooler and windier aboard ship, and island weather may vary from what you experience onshore.

Aix-En-Provence (optional extension): As a rule, the Provence and Riviera regions have much more sunshine, higher temperatures, and longer spells of consistent weather than areas farther north. The towns situated on the Cote d'Azur follow the old geography lesson precept about the Mediterranean: hot dry summers, warm wet winters—except that the winters can also be chilly at night and in the early morning. The middle of the day is often clear and brilliant. The rain, when it comes, generally goes away again quite soon. But it can also rain buckets, seemingly all of a sudden. Another local weather feature is wind. Some breezes are gentle and soothing, but there are a variety of fiercer winds as well. The most famous is the *mistral*, which comes tearing down from the north out a clear sky and generally blows for several days at a time, especially during spring.

Climate Charts

The following charts reflect the average *climate* as opposed to *weather* conditions. This means they serve only as general indicators of what can reasonably be expected. As your departure approaches you may wish to monitor current weather conditions online. Here is the official data from the weather observation stations closest to our destinations.

Average Daily High/Low Temperatures (°F), Humidity, & Monthly Rainfall

MONTH	FLORENCE, Italy			NICE, France		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (avg)	Avg. Monthly Rainfall (inches)	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Average # of days with rain
JAN	49-35	76	1.9	56-42	67-65	8
FEB	53-36	75	2.1	56-43	69-63	6
MAR	60-40	72	2.7	59-46	70-66	7
APR	68-46	72	2.9	63-50	75-69	11
MAY	75-53	72	3	69-57	76-71	9
JUN	84-58	71	2.7	76-64	74-70	6
JUL	89-63	64	1.5	81-69	72-70	4
AUG	88-62	66	1.9	82-69	72-70	6
SEP	81-58	71	3.3	76-63	76-70	8
OCT	69-51	76	4	70-57	76-69	10
NOV	58-42	81	3.9	62-49	72-6	10
DEC	50-37	81	2.8	57-43	68-65	9

MONTH	TORINO, Italy (optional extension)			BOLOGNA, Italy (optional extension)		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Avg. Monthly Rainfall (inches)	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (avg)	Avg. Monthly Rainfall
JAN	43-28	88-66	1.6	41-29	85	—
FEB	47-31	88-62	.6	48-31	80	—
MAR	55-37	84-54	2.6	58-39	74	—
APR	61-43	87-56	3.8	68-46	72	—
MAY	69-51	90-61	4.6	82-54	72	—
JUN	76-58	86-57	3.6	82-60	65	—
JUL	82-63	86-55	2.3	87-64	65	—
AUG	80-62	88-57	2.6	86-64	67	—
SEP	74-56	91-60	2.8	80-60	73	—
OCT	63-47	92-65	3.4	65-50	85	—
NOV	51-35	91-67	2.9	53-41	87	—
DEC	45-29	89-68	1.9	44-33	90	—

MONTH	AIX EN PROVENCE, France (optional extension)		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Avg. Monthly Rainfall (inches)
JAN	51-37	82-64	1.9
FEB	53-38	81-60	1.6
MAR	58-42	79-55	1.8
APR	63-47	76-53	1.8
MAY	70-54	75-52	1.8
JUN	78-61	73-51	1.0
JUL	84-66	70-46	.6
AUG	83-65	74-47	1.0
SEP	77-60	79-54	2.5
OCT	68-52	83-61	3.7
NOV	58-44	81-65	3.0
DEC	53-38	83-67	2.3

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.



7. 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

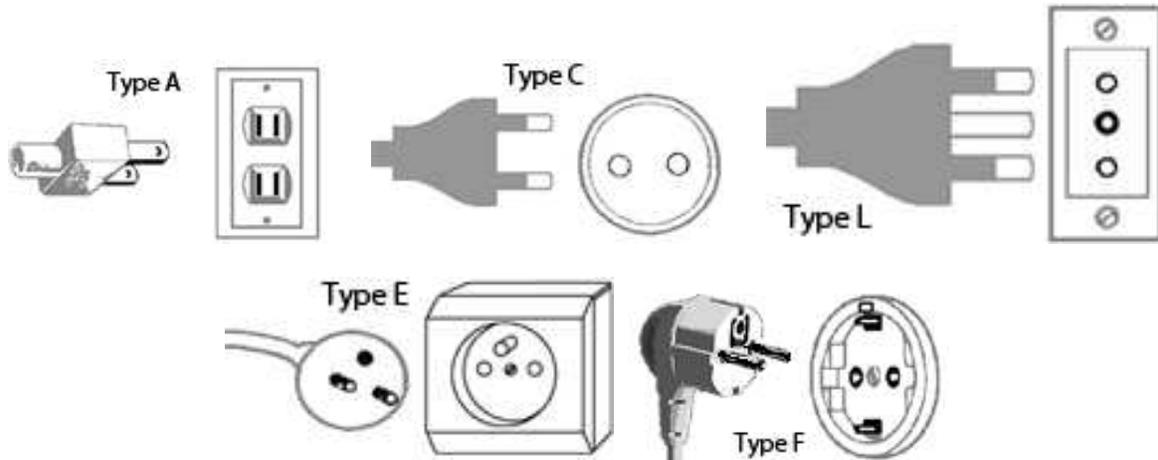
The standard U.S. electrical system — 110V 60Hz current and flat two- or three-pronged polarized plug system — is rare elsewhere. The overwhelming choice for the rest of the world is 220-240V and 50/60Hz current with a variety of plug shapes, sizes, and configurations. Some plugs will work with multiple 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.

On board our small ship, you will find both American outlets (plug Type A; running 110 volt electricity) and Western European outlets (plug Type C; running 220 volts). A hair dryer is provided in the cabin.

France uses the Type C “Europlug” and Type E plugs and receptacles that accommodate them, and uses 230 V and 50 Hz current. The electric current in Italy is 220 V AC, 50 Hz. 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 any small appliances you bring.



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.

Phones & Calling

Just picking up the phone or getting a paper can be a new experience in a foreign country. To ensure you are available during your trip to friends and relatives at home, you will receive two copies of your hotel list, including phone numbers, with your final documents package. One copy is for you to bring, and one to leave behind with friends or relatives in case they need to contact you during the trip.

When calling overseas from the US, dial 011 for international exchange, then the country's code, then and the number. The country code, which is indicated by a plus sign (+), is +33 for France and +39 for Italy. When calling from the US, you may need to drop the first digit of the area code.

When calling the US from abroad, generally you dial 00 for international exchange, then the US country code +1, and then the number with area code.

TIP: Past travelers have recommended checking with your service provider about your international phone plan working on a cruise at sea, since some plans can end up working only on land.

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.

8. GRAND CIRCLE CRUISE LINE'S SMALL SHIP CRUISE TOURS



Aboard Ship: The M/V *Arethusa*

Owned, operated, and staffed by Grand Circle Cruise Line, this ship was designed exclusively for our travelers. On the main deck, you'll find our reception area and the ship's library. For relaxation, the lounge/bar features inviting leather couches and soft chairs. Topside, a sun deck has classic wooden deck chairs for admiring the scenery. When it's time for meals, our large dining area at the stern features a single seating policy. While cruising, we'll enjoy daily breakfast and lunch buffets; sit-down dinners feature international and local specialties paired with regional wines.

Included features of the M/V *Arethusa*

The Ship:

- Restaurant with single open seating
- Open Sun Deck for prime viewing
- Shipboard activities
- Smoke-free environment
- All shipboard announcements made in English

All Cabins:

- All outside cabins
- Layout of 150-163 square feet (24 doubles) and 120-135 square feet (2 singles)
- Private bath with shower, hair dryer
- Color TV with movies, and a bow camera for ship-front views
- Ample closet and dresser space
- Direct-dial telephone

An important word: While our ship features larger-than-usual cabins, please keep in mind that this ship is a coastal vessel, not a large ocean cruise ship. Coastal cabins, in comparison, are relatively small, and ship amenities, in general, are comfortable but not lavish.

Cabin Assignments

You will receive confirmation of your deck and/or cabin category upfront in writing; it will be on your invoice and online in My Account at www.gct.com/myaccount. However, your cabin number may not be assigned until you arrive on board the ship. (This is normal procedure for ships in many parts of the world, including Europe.) If there's no cabin number on your invoice or online, you can presume it will be assigned later and communicated to you when you board.

Dining

You'll enjoy fine cuisine and excellent views in your ship's dining room, featuring a warm decor of dark woods, rich carpeting, floor-to-ceiling windows, and white-linen and china table settings. Your ship's daily service includes breakfast and lunch buffets, and a more formal dinner. Our professional chefs will create unique menus for you that feature regional specialties. Included with both lunch and dinner are two complimentary drinks per traveler; you'll be able to choose from house wine, draft beer, or a selection of soft drinks. In addition, a selection of other fine wines and beer is available for purchase. Travelers may also bring a bottle of their own favorite wine to dinner to enjoy at their table. Should you care to avail yourself of this service, there will be a corkage fee of approximately \$5 per bottle, charged to your shipboard account.

Please note that if you bring your own alcohol aboard, it can only be consumed in the dining room as described above, or in your cabin. Consumption of alcohol purchased outside the ship is not permitted in the lounge or public areas. We also offer complimentary coffee and tea throughout the day, available in the lounge.

Open-table, single seating for all meals: Each meal is open seating—reservations of any kind are not accepted. Dinner has only one designated time for its open seating, announced each day aboard ship.

Dining times: Dining times for all meals may vary depending on the day's sightseeing and sailing schedule, but in general, meal times are as follows:

Early riser breakfast: 7:00 -7:30 am

Breakfast: 7:30-8:30 am

Lunch: 1:00-2:00 pm

Dinner: 7:00 pm

Special diets & celebrations: Special diets, such as low-cholesterol or vegetarian, can be accommodated, as well as the recognition of an anniversary or birthday. Please call Grand Circle Cruise Line to submit your request no later than 45 days prior to departure. Religious dietary regimens, such as kosher or halal meals, cannot be prepared aboard ship.

Dress code: The dining-room dress code is casual, though most travelers dress nicely for the Captain's Welcome Reception and Farewell Dinner.

Non-smoking policy: The entire dining room is non-smoking at all times.

Drinking Water

Tap water aboard ship is safe for drinking. Bottled water is also available for purchase. There is one ice machine on board.

Electricity

Cabins are equipped with 220-volt outlets. In your bathroom you will find a dual 110/220-volt outlet, for use with electric shavers. (Your bathroom also comes equipped with a hair dryer).

Embarkation/Disembarkation

On the day of disembarkation, your cabin will no longer be available after breakfast. You may sit in the ship's lounge or on the Sun Deck until disembarkation.

Headsets

During the cruise portion of your trip, complimentary headsets will be provided on all of your included and optional tours, so that you can better hear your Program Director or local guide.

Laundry and Linen Service

Laundry service is available for a fee (currently it costs about \$5 per shirt). Please note that neither self-service laundry facilities nor dry cleaning services are available. There will be one change of bed linens during your cruise. Towels are changed daily.

On Board Activities

During your cruise you'll enjoy exclusive Discovery Series events, including group activities that relate to the region, theme dinners, organized discussions, and talks on upcoming ports of call.

Medical Care

Our entire fleet adheres to stringent European safety standards. Ships feature fully staffed reception desks for most of the day (from 7:00 AM to 10 PM) and each cabin is equipped with an emergency call button available to alert the Captain.

Recreational Facilities

The bar is open all day, with soft drinks, beer, wine, and liquors for sale. You may also enjoy our ship's sun deck, lounge, library and bar.

Shore Excursions

Included during your cruise are many sightseeing tours. Other optional tours are available for purchase. Your Program Director will provide information on these optional excursions on your arrival. Please note that optional tours can only be purchased with a credit card.

Smoking/Non-Smoking Policy

All cabins are non-smoking. Smoking is permitted only outside on the sun deck. Smoking is not allowed anywhere else on the ships.

Telephone Services

To make telephone calls from the ship, you will be charged on your shipboard account on the last day of the cruise. Phone calls are directly from your cabin and through satellite, and ***are charged per minute without regard to whether or not it is a local, international or Calling Card based call.*** We advise you to use it only for an emergency, as this is a satellite connection and a very expensive service (for example, calls will cost about \$10.00 per minute).

Wi-Fi Access

Free Wi-Fi access is available on board. Your Hotel Manager will provide your personal code. You will need to sign a responsibility declaration for the websites you visit. The service is based on local mobile providers: usage may be restricted by volume. If you want to use the Wi-Fi connection you'll need to bring your own device (laptop/tablet/netbook) — ships do not rent or loan these devices. Shipboard access is subject to the challenges of travel: ship location, signal availability, and usage volume on board will affect connectivity and speed. The ship's Internet connection demands a strong 3G cell phone signal, which is unavailable in many of the areas we visit. You can expect disruptions of both long and short duration.

Ship Specifications

The ships are of Malta registry with international crews and feature the following specifications:

<i>Entered service</i>	<i>Length</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Passenger capacity</i>	<i>Crew members</i>	<i>Decks</i>	<i>Cabins</i>	<i>Elevator</i>	<i>Chairlift</i>	
<i>M/V Arethusa</i>	2008	193	35	50	23	3	26	no	no

Your GCCL Program Director

During your Grand Circle Cruise Line Small Ship Cruise Tour, you'll have reliable assistance available at all times from an onsite Grand Circle Cruise Line Program Director. Your Program Director is fluent in English and can give you an inside perspective on your destinations. Along the way, your Program Director is supported by local tour guides who guide you expertly through particular sites and cities.

Many Grand Circle Cruise Line Program Directors are graduates of professional education programs for travel guides. In addition, they receive specialized training directly from Grand Circle Cruise Line, 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 Small Ship Cruise Tour, and on the optional *Bologna* and *Turin & Lake Maggiore* extensions (should you choose either.) The *Aix en Provence* optional extension on this itinerary features Hospitality Representatives who guide your included tours and are available to assist you with your planning and offer helpful insight for your personal explorations.

9. ABOUT YOUR DESTINATIONS

We're including some handy practical details and a brief introduction to the places you'll visit on your Small Ship Cruise 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 Cruise Line 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.

Cruising the Italian and French Rivas

As any sailor will tell you: you don't command the sea – it commands you. Most of the time things go along without complications, but all cruising is subject to the vagaries of winds, tides, and water, and flexibility of mind is vital to ensure a relaxed and full experience during your cruise. Port calls, particularly in high season, occur at the pleasure of the local port authority and marine traffic and conditions can create delays that might result in some re-scheduling. More frequently visited ports are very traveler-friendly. At less frequented islands you may discover that local restaurants don't accept credit cards.

General Safety & Security

As you travel, exercise the same caution and awareness that you would in a large American city. Don't be overly nervous or suspicious, but keep your eyes open. If you are venturing out after dark, go with one or two other people. Carry a one-day supply of cash in your pocket. Carry most of your money, and your passport, in a travel pouch or money belt under your shirt. Replenish your pocket supply when you are in a safe and quiet place, or in our vehicle. You don't need to carry your passport every day; a photocopy, along with your driver's license, is sufficient.

Do not leave valuable items unattended in your room. Almost all of our hotels offer use of a hotel safe at the front desk or an electronic in-room safe (for which you can set a personal pin number). Please utilize them.

Pickpockets may create a sudden distraction. In any sort of puzzling street situation, try to keep one hand on your money belt. Trains within the Cinque Terre villages are a high target for pickpockets -- you need just to be careful and carry only what's necessary for the day. Pickpockets usually get into action during train stops by exit-entrance. If an encounter with a local turns out to be long and complicated and involves money or your valuables, be very careful. Con artists sometimes target travelers.

Florence in Brief

Capital of Tuscany

From the Etruscans to the Romans to the Renaissance, the region of Tuscany is possibly the world's greatest repository of art, ranging from extraordinary paintings and sculpture to frescoes and architectural masterpieces. The region is a blend of rugged hills, fertile valleys, and long stretches of sandy beaches that arc along the west coast of central Italy and fringe the pine-forested coastal plain of the Maremma. Visitors come in search of fine art, to explore the extraordinary countryside, to savor the simple yet tasty cuisine and wine, or enjoy the seacoast and islands. The cities and towns of Tuscany house a centuries-old heritage of culture and art that produced magnificent medieval cathedrals and the marvels of the Renaissance period. Florence is the most popular city, but many other cities are popular as well: Siena, Pisa, Arezzo, Cortona, San Gimignano and Lucca, and Volterra come immediately to mind.

City Layout and Details

Sitting astride the Arno River, Florence is a small city, best seen on foot. Most sights are within a brief walk, with about a half hour stroll separating those furthest apart. Restaurants are plentiful in the compact *centro storico* (historic center), a tangle of medieval streets and squares. The bulk of Florence, including the most popular sights are north of the Arno, with Oltrarno, an old artisans neighborhood, on the south side.

In Florence (in the center and older sections of town only) private homes, some offices, and hotels are numbered in black (or blue), while businesses, shops, and restaurants are numbered independently in red. Numbers are sequential, but you'll need to pay attention to the colors as well, since 1(red) can be right after 6(black) and vice-versa. Newer sections of the city use the international system.

Created by tearing down the medieval city walls, the Viale is a traffic ring of wide boulevards that circle the city center. Roughly in the center is the Piazza del Duomo, and the Duomo itself. To the south you'll find the Piazza Santa Maria Novella, the train station, and by following the Via dei Calzaiuoli, the Piazza della Signoria near the river, where you'll find the Palazzo Vecchio and the Uffizi Galleries.

Or take the Via Roma, through cafe-lined Piazza della Repubblica, and continue down Via Calimala and Via Por Santa Maria to the Ponte Vecchio, the Arno's oldest bridge. To the east of Piazza della Repubblica you'll find Florence's main shopping street, the Via de' Tornabuoni.

North from the Duomo, Via dei Servi leads to the pretty Piazza Santissima Annunziata, while the Via Ricasoli leads to the Piazza san Marco, passing the Accademia Gallery (with Michelangelo's David) on the way.

Cross the Arno via the Ponte Vecchio, and continue along the shop-lined Via Guicciardini runs toward Piazza dei Pitti and its museum-filled Pitti Palace.

Cuisine

Traditional Italian meals used to be very hearty, consisting of a first course (primo piatto), usually a pasta dish or soup; a second course (secondo piatto), meat, fish, or chicken; a vegetable side dish to go with the main course (contorno); and dessert (dolce). Over time this has changed in some places, and lighter fare is often on the menu.

Pasta, of course, is the national specialty and regional differences are distinguishable mostly by the type of sauce and choice of ingredients used with a particular pasta, which comes in all shapes. After tomato, the most common sauce in the north of Italy is called *panna* and has a cream base. Since Italy has so much coastal area, its restaurants offer a lot of fresh fish. Fresh vegetables, too, are often the base for antipasto, or are served as a separate first course. Seasonal vegetables include yellow, red, and green sweet peppers; eggplant; mushrooms; green and broad beans; zucchini; asparagus; and artichokes. After a meal, Italians typically have fruit for dessert, or a sweet confection, such as *montebianco* (a rich chestnut puree) or *gelato* (ice cream).

Tuscan cuisine is known for its "noble simplicity." A quick look into any neighborhood trattoria at mealtime, as they serve fresh, hearty fare to the locals, will prove that statement.

Much of the simplicity of Tuscan cuisine was born of necessity: the emphasis on fresh, local ingredients was a response to life's necessities for the common man. Wild herbs and greens were used in simple soups and no part of an animal went to waste. Tuscan bread, a rustic sourdough, did without expensive salt. As a result it went stale quickly— and *ribollita* the vegetable soup that is thickened with bread, was born. *Panzanella* is a summer salad made from stale bread cubes (similar to French croutons), fresh tomatoes, basil and olive oil. Tuscans created dishes like *castagnaccio*, a cake made with chestnut flour (to avoid using pricy wheat flour), raisins, pine nuts, orange zest and olive oil.

Hardier stock was found in the hills around Florence: game, including wild boar (used in locally-made salamis and air-dried hams), duck and rabbit served grilled, roasted or in a rich pasta sauce, and fish from the lakes as well as seafood from the coast were staples in their season. Porcini, wild mushrooms, are another favorite, served in the fall after foragers have combed the woods around the city. You should not fail to add a glass of the local Chianti to any meal – it originated in those hills, as well.

Some of Florence's best-known dishes include:

- *Bistecca alla fiorentina*: a large steak from the Chianina region or Maremmana cattle. Grilled quickly over a hot, wood fire, it is served rare with a drizzle of Tuscan olive oil.
- *Porchetta*: suckling pig, stuffed with garlic and herbs, and brushed with a rosemary branch as it roasts.
- *Trippa all fiorentina*: tripe cooked in wine, tomatoes and herbs. Find it in the city's central market, called *lampredotto* and garnished with Parmigiano cheese.

Drinking Water

You can drink the tap water in Florence. It is generally safe, but some find the taste a little off. Bottled water is readily available for purchase, and you'll find Fontanelli ad Alta Qualità, or filtered water fountains, at various locations. The water from these fountains is fine, and the locals often refill their plastic bottles from these fountains.

Laundry Service

Self-service laundromats are available in Florence. Your Program Director can advise you as to where these can be found.

Local Transportation

Walking: You can leisurely stroll between the two top sights, the Duomo and the Uffizi, in about 10 minutes. The hike from the most northerly sights, San Marco with its Fra' Angelico frescoes and the Accademia with Michelangelo's David, to the most southerly, the Pitti Palace across the Arno, should take no more than 30 to 45 minutes. From Santa Maria Novella across town to Santa Croce is an easy 20- to 30-minute walk.

Most of the streets, however, were designed to handle the moderate pedestrian traffic and occasional horse-drawn cart of a medieval city. Much of the historic center is closed to traffic, but taxis, residents with parking permits, and Vespas are exempt and crowd the streets. In July and August the cars, pollution, pedestrian traffic and heat can be difficult. Note also that the streets are mainly cobbled or flagstone, as are the few sidewalks, and they can be rough on soles, feet, and joints after a while. Florence may be a city of high fashion shoes, but a sensible pair of quality walking shoes or sneakers is highly recommended.

Bus: Florence's efficient bus system is readily accessible, but within the city center it isn't of much use. If you're interested in the suburbs it's a viable option, but for the central city walking is the best option. Tickets are 1.20€ (about \$1.70) and are good for an hour, and a 24-hour pass is 4.50€ (about \$6.00). Buses make runs on principal streets only in the historic center.

Taxi: Taxis are expensive, and the city's one-way system forces drivers to use convoluted routes – making this the least economical way to get about town. The standard rate is .80€ per kilometer (a bit more than a half-mile; for a mile expect about \$2.00), with a whopping minimum fare of 2.40€ (\$3.00) to start the meter (and nearly double that at night and on Sun), plus a baggage fee of about \$.75 per bag.

Cannes in Brief

City Layout and Details

Cannes' primary boulevard – the place to see and be seen – is the Croisette, a promenade that curves along the blue Mediterranean in a gentle arc. It faces the old yacht harbor, the Palais des Festivals et des Congrès (home of the Cannes Film Festival), as well as the famed beaches. The Croisette is lined with expensive shops, boutiques, and restaurants, and overlooks the iconic city beaches. In the northwest part of town you'll find Le Suquet, the old town, and the 16th century Notre-Dame de l'Esperance church and its clock tower. Climb the tower for views out over the city, the Lerins Islands, the harbor and the Palais des Festivals (assuming the weather obliges – as it usually does.) Just a few blocks north you can visit the Forville market for some earthy retail therapy: fish, flowers, and seasonal vegetables are the dominant commodities here. Drop to the south from this market and you'll be overlooking the old harbor with its array of expensive sail and motor yachts and the people who live aboard them. Follow the Croisette as it gently curves to the southeast and you'll quickly come to the Palais des Festivals et des Congrès (and the Allee des Etoiles – the Star's Walk), and then the beaches to the right, and stores to the left. Splitting the city, the Rue d'Antibes roughly parallels the Croisette, with a block in between the two. You can simply walk back and forth on the side streets to discover the city behind the glitter.

Activities

In addition to a lovely climate and beaches, Cannes is of course famous for the international film festival that makes its home here each May. Feature film openings are almost always by invitation only, but seats for less well-known films are often available. And there's always the possibility of a star sighting. But beware: it's busy and crowded. In July and August the city plays host to the Festival d'Art Pyrotechnic. Seats for this are available all along the Croisette, and at any restaurant or café with outdoor tables. The Petit Train rolls through both the new and old cities on a daily basis (except in November), and is a fun way to see Cannes. It features a choice of two itineraries, each lasting about a half an hour (more or less, depending on the traffic), or a consolidated ticket that allows you to take both tours.

Cuisine

The cuisine of the Côte d'Azur is characterized by that delicious southern mix of olive oil, garlic and fresh tomatoes, onions and anchovies, and black olives. These ingredients constitute the base for many of the local fish and meat specialties. The key cooking-style words are Provençal and Niçois. Many dishes feature fragrant herbs like fennel, thyme, rosemary, and bay leaf; others are centered around garlic, tomatoes, and olives. In fact, olives of every conceivable size and color, cured with herbs or salt or flavored oil, feature prominently in the cuisine. Also typically Mediterranean is the extensive use of shellfish (clams, cockles, crabs, mussels, sea anemones, sea urchins) and fish (bass, red mullet, sardines), either grilled or combined in chunky, spicy soups.

Locally produced artichokes and asparagus are much favored along the Côte d'Azur. Ratatouille, an olive oil-based stew of aubergines and tomatoes, is also very popular; it is perhaps the most famous of all vegetable dishes. Another Mediterranean "claim to fame" is *salade niçoise*—tuna, tomatoes, black olives, capers, potatoes, string beans, and hard-boiled eggs—first created in Nice. Its sandwich form, *pan bagnat*, is available at every local snack bar.

The celebrated aperitif along the Riviera is *pastis* (essence of aniseed), which is high in alcohol and usually served diluted with iced water. The local wines are uncomplicated but go well with seasoned food that calls for a refreshing, fruity wine—and Cotes de Provence (mostly dry rosés) are just that. Or try a glass of Bandol rouge (red), blanc de Provence (white), or Bellet (red or white).

When dining out in Cannes, there is something to keep in mind other than the food: the price. This is an expensive city, and most of its restaurants are expensive. Moving back from the Croisette—to the Rue d'Antibes or to Le Suquet—can help, and so can a recommendation from your Program Director or a good guidebook. In almost any restaurant, however, you'll be treated well: that's part of the Cannes experience. And the food is nearly always excellent; the French wouldn't have it any other way.

Drinking Water

The tap water in France is safe to drink, but it is processed differently than tap water in the U.S., so some travelers find the taste a little off. Bottled water—especially French brands like Evian and Perrier—is readily available for purchase, and comes in *gazeuse* (“gaz-ewes”, meaning sparkling) or *plat* (flat; also can appear as *non-gazeuse*). In restaurants, if you want tap water and not bottled water, ask for *carafe d'eau* (“care-af doh”).

Laundry Service

Self-service laundromats are available in Cannes. Your Program Director can advise you as to where these can be found.

Local Transportation

In the heart of Cannes walking is the only sensible way to get around—and you'll enjoy the city best that way. For longer distances, the only public transportation in Cannes is the bus system. Most buses run every 15 minutes and tickets are available on the bus or at a bus station at about 1.50€ each (around \$2), ten for 8.30€ (about \$11.25), or a weekly pass for 9.20€ (about \$12). Local trains offer the chance to visit interesting destinations that are outside the city but nearby. Taxis and car rentals are also available.

Torino & Stresa in Brief (optional extension)

Piedmont Region

Piedmont comes from Medieval Latin and means “at the foot of the mountains”, and indeed Piedmont is surrounded on three sides by the Alps, including Monviso, where the river Po rises, and Monte Rosa. It has borders with France, Switzerland and the Italian regions of Lombardy, Liguria, Aosta Valley and it just nudges Emilia Romagna. The landscape is varied, ranging from the rugged peaks of the massifs of Monte Rosa and Gran Paradiso to the rice paddies of Vercelli and Novara, to the gentle hillsides of the Langhe (famed for its wines and white truffles) and Montferrat as well as gently rolling plains. Piedmont contains major industrial cities, Turin, home of FIAT, primary among them.

Torino City Layout and Details

The arcaded Via Roma, lined with shops and cafes, starts in front of the 19th-century Stazione di Porta Nuova station through a series of piazzas toward the Piazza Castello and the center of the city, about a 15-minute walk. The Via Roma roughly bisects the rectangle that comprises central Torino. Walking from the train station, you’ll find the circular Piazza Carlo Felice—built around a garden surrounded by inviting outdoor cafes. Further along you’ll find the Piazza San Carlo and the twin churches of San Carlo and Santa Christina. At the end of Via Roma, the Piazza Castello is dominated by the Palazzo Madama. Just off the piazza is the Palazzo Reale, and the gardens of the Savoys. Walk east from here and toward the river along Via Po and you’ll find Torino’s university district as well as one of Italy’s largest squares, the Piazza Vittorio Veneto and, at the end of that square the Po River. Modern Torino, home to Fiat, is a dynamic town that is home to textile factories, metal, engineering and chemical companies.

Cuisine

The Piedmont (literally “at the foot of the mountains”) region consists mostly of the extensive Po Plain, sitting between the Alps and the Apennines. It’s a very fertile area that supports grasslands, cereals and rice. A popular dish is fonduta is a popular dish, a melted cheese dip of milk, eggs and white truffles. Chards are prepared *alla bagna cauda*. *Bagna cauda* is a hot sauce used for dipping. It usually contains oil or butter, anchovies, garlic and truffles and is often served with a glass of red wine. The name translates as “hot bath,” because raw vegetables – such as celery, peppers, and artichokes – can be dipped into it to add an explosion of flavor. The region is famed for Gorgonzola cheese, as are many delicious wines, including Barolo, Barbaresco, Grignolino, and white Asti – still or sparkling. Chocolate is also popular – Torino was making chocolate even before Switzerland. The Piedmont is home to the white Alba truffle—perhaps the most sought-after truffle in the world. Thinly sliced raw truffle adds a rich flavor that enhances even the simplest dish. *Robiola di Roccaverano* is a creamy cheese available in limited quantities from a small number of artisanal cheese makers. Both scarcity and quality make it a true delicacy.

Cuisine in Stresa is based on lake fish like perch, pike, lake trout, and whitefish (Lavarello.)

The local cheeses, like the celebrated Bettelmatt or the tasty Ossolano d’Alpe, are particularly delicious when eaten with the high quality honey produced in the area.

Speciality cured meats include the mortadella of the Ossola (listed in the Slow Food Organisation's Ark of Taste as a prized local food), the raw ham and violini di capra (cured goat's leg) of the Vigizzo Valley. Locally produced wines complement these hams and salamis perfectly: full-bodied reds like Ghemme Docc and Nebbiolo from the Novara hills, Prunent and Neuv Bruschet from the Ossola valleys, or the wines of the Angera area.

Finally, the area surrounding Lake Maggiore offers an equally diversified range of local specialty cakes and biscuits, such as the Fugascine of Mergozzo and the Margheritine of Stresa.

Drinking Water

Water in Torino and Stresa tastes good and is perfectly fine for drinking. To be sure you have convenient access to good water on your walking trips, we suggest you carry a bottle of water with you.

Laundry Service

Self-service laundromats are available in Torino. Your Program Director can advise you as to where these can be found.

Local Transportation

Central Torino is easily managed on foot. There's also a network of GTT trams and buses—with tickets for public transportation available at newsstands for 1€ (valid for about an hour minutes). Or purchase the Torino+Piemonte Card to access the city's public transportation for 48 hours.

Aix-en-Provence in Brief (optional extension)

City Layout and Details

Located about 20 miles north of coastal Marseille, Aix-en-Provence, the former capital of Provence, is blessed with a lush landscape flecked with ancient ruins and beautifully preserved architecture. A university town since 1409, Aix-en-Provence retains the youthful enthusiasm of its student population, as well as the dedication to enjoyment and relaxation found at its cosmopolitan restaurants, warm cafes, and small but robust museums.

The most striking thoroughfare in town is the Cours Mirabeau, whose construction was undertaken in the 17th century—a lush, tree-arched boulevard lined with mansions and accented with 18th century fountains. It seems to have leapt right off a postcard. On the street's north side is an irresistible series of shops, cafes, and pastry shops. The tarts are exceptional here—made with fresh, local almonds, fruits, and honeys—as are the candied fruits. The south side hosts the splendid hotels, once the vaunted residences of marquises and duchesses. You'll spot the town's first Gothic church, now the Musee Granet, which features eight Cezannes and the wonderful personal collection of the local painter Francois Granet.

The old quarter lies to the north of the Cours Mirabeau. It's home to a 16th-century clock tower, a Tapestry Museum that was once a bishop's palace, and the imposing 17th-century Hotel de Ville. The ancient Roman baths are just beyond the old quarter, as are the town's famous 18th-century spas.

Laundry Service

Self-service laundromats are available in Aix-en-Provence. Your Program Director can advise you as to where these can be found.

Local Transportation

The lovely Cours Mirabeau bisects the town from east to west and is a useful landmark for ambling. The neighborhood south of Cours Mirabeau is arranged in a standard grid pattern of perpendicular streets, while the neighborhood to the north—the old town—is, not surprisingly, a warren of narrow, curling streets, open squares, and cobbled lanes. But with new, charming views at every turn, the panoply of byways is an essential part of the attraction of Aix-en-Provence.

The busy bus station is on Rue Lapierre, and buses run regularly to Marseille, Avignon, Cannes, Nice, and Arles, among other destinations. Taxis are easy to spot on Cours Mirabeau.

Bologna in Brief (optional extension)

Emilia-Romagna

Emilia-Romagna is an administrative Region in Northern Italy, with about 4.4 million inhabitants. Nearly half of the region's 8,700 square mile area consists of plains while the rest is hilly and/or mountainous. To the north and southeast the mountains stretch for nearly 200 miles but there are only three peaks above 6,500 feet. It's one of Europe's richest, most developed areas, and has Italy's third highest GDP per capita. Bologna, its capital, has one of Italy's highest quality of life, offers advanced social services and is home to one of the first universities in the world — the University of Bologna.

As a cultural center, the region is home to Romanesque and Renaissance cities, such as Modena, Parma and Ferrara (to name a few). Another important city is Ravenna, the capital city of the Western Roman Empire from 402 until that empire collapsed in 476—this small city alone boasts eight UNESCO World Heritage Sites. And lastly, Emilia-Romagna is also home to some of the world's most exotic auto companies (Ferrari, Lamborghini, Maserati, and Ducati).

City Layout and Details

As with Florence, the historical center of Bologna is a traffic restricted zone from 7:00am to 8:00pm daily when only authorized vehicles are allowed. Looking at a city map the best way to orient yourself is to find the Due Torri landmark in the center. The Due Torri are easily seen from the two main squares — the Piazza Re Enzo and the Piazza Maggiore. The two main streets of Bologna make a T shaped figure leading from Piazza Maggiore to the railway station, both lined up with porticos. The northeast section of the map is the university district. The two southern quadrants of the map are residential sections of the city. However, outside and south of the city center you'll find hills and the Giardini Margherita, the largest park of the city. The center of the city is surrounded by the Viali, an easily recognizable circular road that surrounds the historical streets and sights of the city.

Cuisine

Bologna is renowned for its culinary tradition—some say it has Italy's best food. It has given its name to the well-known Bolognese sauce, a meat based pasta sauce called in Italy *ragù alla bolognese* but in the city itself just *ragù* as in *Tagliatelle al ragù*. Dishes here depend heavily on meats and cheeses. As in all of Emilia-Romagna region, cured pork meats such as *prosciutto*, *mortadella* and salami are a big part of the local food industry. Local dishes include *lasagne*, *tortellini* served in broth, and *mortadella*, the original Bologna sausage.

Laundry Service

Self-service laundromats are available in Bologna. Your Program Director can advise you as to where these can be found.

Local Transportation

The center of Bologna is easy to cover on foot; most of the major sights are in and around Piazza Maggiore. However, if you don't want to walk, city buses leave for most points from Piazza Nettuno or Piazza Maggiore. Free maps are available at the storefront office of the ATC; and tickets are available at any of the many booths and tobacconists in Bologna. Tickets cost 1€ (about \$1.45) and are valid 60 minutes. A citypass -- a booklet of 10 tickets, each valid for 1 hour -- costs 8.50€ (about \$12). There is also a 1-day ticket, valid for 24 hours that costs 3€ (about \$4.35). Once on board, remember to have your ticket validated: fines can be as high as 150€ (\$218).

10. DEMOGRAPHICS, HISTORY AND CULTURE

We encourage you to learn about the regions of the world you will soon be exploring before your departure. The ancient and contemporary cultures of this area are rich and complex. Even a small amount of background reading can help you make sense of the kaleidoscope of facts and impressions that will come your way. Having some knowledge in advance can complement and enrich what you can learn from your expert Program Director.

Italy

Area: 116,345 square miles

Capital: Rome

Language: In addition to Italian, many of Italy's natives speak French and English.

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: Campania (the region of Naples, Sorrento, and the Amalfi coast) has 220 miles of coastline and is on the southwestern side of the Italian peninsula. Its two famous gulfs, the Bay of Naples and Gulf of Salerno, are enclosed by picturesque promontories, including the Sorrento Peninsula. The town of Sorrento, about 32 miles south of Naples, spreads out along the crest of its fabled cliffs, which offer spectacular views of the Bay of Naples.

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.

Population: 61,680,122

Religion: Christian 80% (overwhelmingly Roman Catholic with very small groups of Jehovah's Witnesses and Protestants); Muslim (about 800,000 to 1 million), Atheist, and Agnostic 20%

Time Zone: Italy is on Central European Time, six hours ahead of U.S. EST. When it is 6am in Washington D.C., it is noon in Rome. Daylight Saving Time begins the last weekend in March and ends the last weekend in October.

National Holidays:

01/01	New Year's Day
01/06	Epiphany
04/03	Good Friday*
04/05	Easter Day
04/06	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

**NOTE: Good Friday is technically not a national holiday. But given the large number of Catholics in Italy, it is widely observed.*

Historical Overview

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.

France

Area: 248,573 square miles

Capital: Paris

Language: French

Location: France is a large country, two and a half times as big as Great Britain, extending for some 600 miles from north to south and from east to west. It has coastlines on both the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea. Its southern land border is Spain; to the north are Belgium, Luxembourg, and Germany; to the east are Switzerland and Italy.

Geography: Except for extreme northern France, which is part of the Flanders plain, the country may be described as four river basins and a plateau. Three of the streams flow west—the Seine into the English Channel, the Loire into the Atlantic, and the Garonne into the Bay of Biscay. The Rhône flows south into the Mediterranean. For about 100 miles, the Rhine is France's eastern border. In the Alps, near the Italian and Swiss borders, is Europe's highest point—Mont Blanc, at 15,781 feet.

Population: 66,259,012

Religion: Roman Catholic (83-88%), Muslim (5-10%), Protestant (2%), Jewish (1%), unaffiliated (4%)

Time Zone: France is ahead of U.S. Eastern Time by six hours, Central Time by seven hours, Mountain Time by eight hours, and Pacific Time by nine hours. The French use the 24-hour clock (they do not use the am and pm system): after midday, just continue counting 13, 14, and so on to provide the 24-hour clock time. For example, 1 pm = 13:00.

National Holidays:

01/01	New Year's Day
04/03	Good Friday
04/05	Easter Sunday
04/06	Easter Monday
05/01	Labor Day / May Day
05/08	WWII Victory Day
07/14	Bastille Day
08/15	Assumption of Mary
11/01	All Saints
11/11	Armistice Day
12/24	Christmas Eve
12/25	Christmas Day

Historical Overview

France has been inhabited since prehistoric times, as evidenced by the Lascaux cave paintings in the Dordogne that date back about 25,000 years. By 10,000 B.C., human communities had migrated across the whole of France. After the ice cap receded, the climate became warmer and wetter, and by about 7000 B.C., farming and pastoral communities were springing up. By 2000 B.C., copper made its debut, and by 1800 B.C., the Bronze Age had arrived in the southeast of the country. Trade links with Spain, central, Europe, and Wessex in Britain were soon established.

When the Celts journeyed to the land they called Gaul sometime before the 7th century B.C., it was occupied by Iberians and Ligurians. Greeks colonized the area around Marseille—which they called Massilia—founding the oldest city in France. And Julius Caesar conquered Gaul for Rome in 57-52 B.C. Lutecia, later to become Paris, was built by the Gallo-Romans in 52 B.C., and the great Roman Amphitheater at Arles was built in 46 B.C. During the 5th century A.D., Germanic tribes invaded, especially the Franks, who converted to Christianity under Clovis I and established the kingdom that became known as France.

On Christmas Day, 800, Charlemagne, king of the Franks, was crowned by the pope in Rome as Holy Roman Emperor, inspiring a unified national spirit across all of France. Although Charlemagne's empire was not long-lasting, it left an indelible imprint upon the French consciousness, even though the vulnerability of successive rulers allowed regional princes, such as the dukes of Burgundy and Normandy, to amass tremendous power. In 987, however, the French nobility elected Hugh Capet king of France, and from this point, French national history is generally agreed to begin. Capet helped to centralize the monarchy, led the Crusades and wars with England, and instituted the Capetian dynasty.

During the 12th and 13th centuries, trade prospered, craft guilds were founded, and new towns cropped up. Paris grew in importance as the royal city and as the intellectual mecca of Europe; the newly established Sorbonne (1257) drew such teachers, lecturers, and philosophers as Abelard, Albertus Magnus, and Thomas Aquinas.

Unfortunately, this era of accomplishment and peace was followed by the destruction and bloodshed of the Hundred Years War of 1337-1453. At its core, the war was essentially a dynastic struggle with England, whose Norman kings held vast feudal estates in France. The series of wars ultimately benefited France, by forcing out the English and intensifying the strength of the French monarchy. Once again, as in the days of Charlemagne, the French throne exuded a powerful, almost mystic aura, this time with the aid of Joan of Arc, whose divine voices urged her to lead the French to victory at Orleans in 1429 and to champion Charles VII as king of France.

During the 16th and 17th centuries, the Valois and Bourbon kings continued to fortify the royal authority, moving the country toward absolute monarchy. The ironclad rule of Cardinals Richelieu and Mazarin (1624-61) set the stage for their splendid successor, Louis XIV, whose reign was probably unequalled in the history of Europe for its elaborate and magnificent style. He established the Baroque power base of Versailles and introduced Europe to a gloriously gilded France—so resplendent that it earned him the title of the Sun King. His was an age of brilliant achievements in art and literature, making France indisputably the intellectual capital of Europe. French became the international language for more than a century afterward.

Ironically, the very splendor of the French monarchy helped precipitate its downfall, for it was expensive to maintain and someone had to pay. The major cause of the French Revolution was the system of special privileges that exempted nobles and clergy from the taxes paid by the peasants and the middle class. In 1789, these latter groups rebelled against the monarchy, guillotined both the king and his queen, Marie Antoinette, and established the short-lived First Republic. The chaos that followed the revolution resulted in the rise of Napoleon, who proclaimed himself emperor in 1804 and, though a dictator, undertook to spread the ideal of liberty to the world through his conquests. After his fall in 1814, the monarchy was restored.

In the 19th century, France alternated between democracy and dictatorship and was characterized by the steady growth of a new French Empire. A revolution in 1848 established a Second Republic, which was superseded by the dictatorship of Napoleon III, nephew of the emperor. Finally, a Third Republic was founded in 1870, during which the Impressionist school of painting emerged, as well as the Modernist movement of music and poetry, heralded by composers Ravel and Debussy and poets Mallarme and Verlaine.

From 1914-18, France fought with the Allies in World War I. Afterwards, with the Treaty of Versailles (1919), France regained the areas of Alsace and Lorraine. Between wars, France nourished major artistic and philosophical movements: Constructivism, Dadaism, Surrealism, and Existentialism.

At the beginning of World War II, France sided with the Allies until it was invaded and defeated by Germany in 1940. The French government, under Marshal Philippe Petain, a World War I hero, established a puppet government in the Vichy. On D-Day—June 6, 1944—the Allies landed on the beaches of Normandy and successfully invaded France. Additional Allied forces landed in Provence. Paris was liberated in August 1944, and France immediately declared full allegiance to the Allies. A provisional government then took power under General de Gaulle.

After World War II, the Fourth Republic was created; it collapsed in 1958 under the pressure of a revolution in Algeria. A Fifth Republic, engineered by Charles de Gaulle, was formed, and under a new constitution, De Gaulle became the first president. He resigned in 1969, after widespread disturbances were begun by student riots in Paris. In 1981, Francois Mitterrand was elected the first Socialist president of France since World War II. He was reelected to a second term in 1988. In 1995, Jacques Chirac, mayor of Paris, was elected president.

France made international headlines on the technological front in 1990, when its new TGV (*Train à Grande Vitesse*) clocked a world record of 322 mph on a practice run. Today, the TGV operates daily service between a number of destinations. In 1997, the world's largest library, the Bibliotheque Nationale Francois Mitterrand, was inaugurated in Paris, and in 1998, France hosted and won the Soccer World Cup, amid enthusiastic crowds the likes of which had not been seen since the end of the war. In 1999, France launched the euro—the single European currency—on prices in shops and restaurants (the actual euro bills and coins were introduced in January, 2002).

Despite its many modern advances, however, visitors can, for the most part, still see the country's past. The French preserve their old buildings well, whether it's the royal chateaux of Blois and Chambord in the Loire Valley or the splendid cathedrals of Chartres and Reims. The landscapes of France are captivating, from the rugged Pyrenees mountains of southern France, and the snow-covered Alps farther north, to the luxuriant vegetation and posh villas of the sun-kissed Riviera on the Mediterranean coast, to the stark, chalk cliffs of Normandy's beaches.

Two of the most appealing areas in France, Provence and the Riviera, are adjacent to one another. Sunny Provence includes towns unmatched anywhere for their charm and beauty; they are set in the craggy mountains from Avignon southeast to Aix-en-Provence. Just south and west is the Riviera, stretching along the coast from Menton to St. Tropez. This is a region beloved by modern painters like Picasso and Matisse for its dramatic cliffs overlooking the clear blue Mediterranean waters, its quaint bays and fishing villages, and its elegant villas and stylish beaches.

11. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Books, Maps, and Movies

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 research.

Suggested Reading

Italy

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.

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.

France:

A Year in Provence and ***Toujours Provence*** by Peter Mayle (Memoir)

Several years ago, Peter Mayle, an advertising executive, and his wife, a tax inspector, left England and moved to a farmhouse in France's Luberon Valley. In these two best-selling books, he recounts his humorous attempts to blend into the Provençal lifestyle, as well as maintain his 200-year-old "new" home.

Running in Place: Scenes from the South of France by Nicholas Delbanco (Culture)

"In this stunning evocation of Provençal culture and history, the critically lauded novelist and essayist Nicholas Delbanco captures both the immediacy of this changing region and the time-honored traditions of its past." –Amazon.com Editorial Reviews

The Magic of Provence: Pleasures of Southern France by Yvone Lenard (Memoir/Travel Essays)

"When Lenard returned to her native France and purchased a house in a Provençal village, an enchanted world of food, wine, and unusual adventures opened up before her. This is her account of the spell cast on her by Provence...as well as tales of others who have been drawn to the region, including Vincent van Gogh, Brigitte Bardot, and Princess Caroline of Monaco. [Features] recipes for food and drinks and tips for entertaining in the Provençal style." -Amazon.com Editorial Reviews

A Traveller's History of France by Robert Cole (History)

Written for the general reader, this 256-page volume begins with the first conquests of ancient Gaul and continues through the Renaissance, the French Revolution, and on through the events of 20th-century French history. Includes maps and an A-Z gazetteer.

Blood Sisters: The French Revolution in Women's Memory by Marilyn Talom (History)

During the French Revolution, scores of female "aristocrats and bourgeoisies, royalists and republicans, as well as servants and peasants, left accounts of the turbulence they witnessed. This collection of the best of these women's chronicles...ranges from the political to the personal and eloquently attests to the human costs of radical social change." -Book News

The French by Theodore Zeldin (Culture)

A witty survey of the country of France, its people, and all things French. The author draws on comments from French men, women, children, and seniors to answer the questions foreign visitors ask most.

Guidebooks:

Your Program Director 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 U.S. may be harder to find, but they are usually available online.

Italy:

La Strada (Federico Fellini, 1954) starring *Guilietta 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 1, and follows their story until 1945. At 5 ½ hours long, it rewards patience.

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.

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.

France:

Paris Je T'aime (2006, color) An unusual project that strings together 20 short films with only one thing in common—they all take place in Paris. There's some big names involved, both starring (Steve Buscemi, Juliette Binoche, Nick Nolte, Natalie Portman, Gena Rowlands) and directing (the Coen brothers, Wes Craven, Gerard Depardieu, Gurinder Chadha). Some of the films are in English and some in French with subtitles.

Amelie starring Audrey Tautou and Mathieu Kassovitz (2001, color) A romantic comedy about a girl named Amélie Poulain and her magical journey to help others and find true love of her own. This 2001 gem tells the heartwarming story of a shy waitress in Paris who decides to change the lives of those around her for the better, while struggling with her own isolation. The award-winning film from director Jean-Pierre Jeunet is a whimsical depiction of contemporary Parisian life, sure to capture the hearts of its viewers time and time again.

Charade starring Audrey Hepburn and Cary Grant (1963, color) Newly widowed and broke, Regina Lambert (played by Hepburn) tries to find the fortune her late husband stole—before his partners in crime find it. But can she trust the mysterious man who says he's trying to help her (Grant)? It's two great stars, at their best, in Paris.

Julie & Julia starring Meryl Streep and Amy Adams (2009, color) Two stories intertwine: "Julia" focuses on Julia Child's first forays into French cooking while "Julie" is about a modern-day writer's attempt to make every recipe in Childs' first cookbook. Although only partly set in France, French cooking plays a key role in almost every scene.

To Catch a Thief starring Grace Kelly and Cary Grant (1955, color) A retired jewel thief tries to clear his name after a rash of burglaries on the French Riviera. Not only a good story, but also notable as the last film Grace Kelly made with Alfred Hitchcock before starting a new career as Princess of Monaco.

The Longest Day starring John Wayne, Henry Fonda, Robert Mitchum (1963, B&W) An epic re-telling of D-Day from the American, English, French, and German points of view. The filmmakers tried to be as authentic as possible, with actors speaking the correct native language (English, French, or German) and battle scenes that were recreated with the help of military advisors who were at D-Day themselves.

La Vie En Rose starring Marion Cotillard (2007, color) In an Oscar-winning performance, Cotillard transforms herself into the famous French singer Edith Piaf for this biopic told as a series of non-linear flashbacks. In French with subtitles.

A Very Long Engagement starring Audrey Tautou and Gaspard Ulliel (2004, color) At the end of WWI, five French soldiers are thrown into the no-man's land between the French and German trenches. All five are declared dead, but Mathilde, the tenacious fiancée of the youngest victim, is convinced that at least one soldier is still alive. Is it her soldier? The film does a good job at balancing the sadness of WWI with humor, sweetness, and romance. In French with subtitles.

Au revoir, les enfants A 1987 film from director Louis Malle, about an 11-year-old boy's experience at a Catholic boarding school during the Nazi occupation of France. Rivals at first, the two students Julien and Jean Bonnet form a bond and eventually become best of friends. Julien learns that Jean is Jewish and the priests at their school are hiding him from the Nazis. On one cold morning in January 1944, the boy's friendship is cut short by a traumatic moment in history that will never be forgotten.

Jules and Jim This 1962 film from Director François Truffaut, is about three people in love and how their relationship evolves over the years. Set in Paris before World War I, two friends, Jules and Jim, fall in love with the same woman, Catherine. This French cinematic masterpiece has it all—a dissection of the uniquely French concept: *ménage à trois*, thoughtful insights on friendship, love, and war, and an oddly endearing connection between the three.

Grand Circle Community & Useful Websites

The following sites offer good travel information:

Grand Circle Travel Store

www.grandcircleshop.com

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

Country information:

visiteurope.com/ **Links to countries**

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

Tourist information: France

www.franceguide.com

www.francetourism.com

www.franceway.com

www.francekeys.com

www.avignon-et-provence.com

www.cannes-on-line.com

www.provence.guideweb.com

Tourist information: Nice

www.nicetourism.com

Tourist information: Italy

www.italiantourism.com **Italy**

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

Travel tips: packing light, choosing luggage, etc.

www.travelite.org

Net café guide: 100s of locations around the globe

www.cybercafes.com

Transportation Security Administration (TSA): agency that screens luggage in U.S.

www.tsa.gov/public