

# Grand Circle Travel<sup>®</sup>

THE LEADER IN VALUE AND WORLDWIDE DISCOVERY SINCE 1958

## Your Grand Circle Travel Planning Guide



## Impressions of Italy: The Amalfi Coast & Tuscany 2026

# Grand Circle Travel®

347 Congress Street, Boston, MA 02210

Dear Traveler,

I am thrilled that you are considering exploring the world with Grand Circle Travel. There are so many wonderful destinations to discover, and the itinerary described inside is a perfect way to fulfill a travel dream.

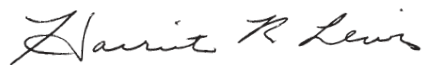
When you travel with us, you will enjoy a thoughtfully designed itinerary that balances unforgettable included discoveries with time for independent explorations. Your experience will be enriched by the company of like-minded American travelers and an **expert, local Program Director**. Assigned to a group of 30 travelers on average, these passionate leaders are ready and eager to share their homeland and insights as only a local can. Whether it is recommending their favorite restaurant, connecting travelers with people and culture, or providing the best regional maps to enhance your leisure time, your Program Director will be available to take care of all the details and ensure that you have a fun and carefree travel experience. You can also rely on the seasoned team at our regional office, who are ready to help 24/7 in case any unexpected circumstances arise.

Throughout your explorations, you will experience Exclusive Discovery Series events designed to connect you with local people and culture. From sharing traditional fare and lively conversation during Home-Hosted Visits, to discussing Controversial Topics impacting everyday life, you'll gain an intimate understanding of your destination, not just a superficial view. And if you choose to travel solo, you will enjoy all these cultural experiences at an unmatched value, with our FREE or low-cost Single Supplements—just one of the reasons we continue to be the leader in solo travel.

Plus, you can put your own personal stamp on your trip, like the **87% of our travelers who customize their experience**. Perhaps you will choose to see more of your destination by adding an optional trip extension to your itinerary. You can also arrive a few days early to explore independently and get acclimated, customize your air itinerary, and more.

I hope you find this Travel Planning Guide helpful. If you have any further questions, do not hesitate to contact one of our Travel Counselors at **1-800-221-2610**.

Warm regards,



Harriet R. Lewis  
Chair  
Grand Circle Travel

# CONTENTS

---

## IMPRESSIONS OF ITALY: THE AMALFI COAST & TUSCANY

Your Vacation at a Glance:

Where You're Going, What it Costs,  
and What's Included ..... **4**

Your Detailed Day-To-Day Itinerary ..... **6**

Pre-Trip Extension ..... **18**

Post-Trip Extension ..... **22**

## ESSENTIAL TRAVEL INFORMATION

Travel Documents & Entry Requirements... **26**

Rigors, Vaccines & General Health ..... **28**

Money Matters: Local Currency &  
Tipping Guidelines. .... **31**

Air, Optional Tours & Staying in Touch ..... **34**

Packing: What to Bring & Luggage Limits... **38**

Climate & Average Temperatures ..... **44**

## ABOUT YOUR DESTINATIONS: CULTURE, ETIQUETTE & MORE

Italian Culture ..... **46**

Shopping: What to Buy, Customs,  
Shipping & More ..... **52**

## DEMOGRAPHICS & HISTORY

Italy ..... **54**

## RESOURCES

Suggested Reading ..... **57**

Suggested Films & Videos ..... **58**

Useful Websites ..... **59**

Useful Apps ..... **60**





Orcia Valley, Tuscany, Italy

## Impressions of Italy: The Amalfi Coast & Tuscany

**Italy:** Sorrento, Montecatini

**16 days starting from \$3,795**

including airfare

Single Supplement: **FREE**

For departure dates & prices, visit

[www.gct.com/acm2026pricing](http://www.gct.com/acm2026pricing)

Journey from the Amalfi Coast, twisting along the sapphire Mediterranean, to the pastoral landscapes of Tuscany—and discover the varied delights of Italy on this Grand Circle Tour. Seek out the art and architectural wonders of the Middle Ages, Renaissance, and ancient world ... explore unforgettable history on display from Herculaneum to Florence ... and enjoy a taste of authentic Italian life during a **Home-Hosted Dinner** in Sorrento.

### IT'S INCLUDED

- Choose to purchase **Grand Circle's airfare**, and your airport transfers, government taxes, fees, and airline fuel surcharges are included. Or, make your own air arrangements
- **14 nights accommodation**
- **28 meals:** 14 breakfasts, 6 lunches, and 8 dinners (including 1 Home-Hosted Dinner)
- **16 included features:** 7 guided tours and 9 exclusive Discovery Series events: *History of Campania* • Home-Hosted Dinner • *Sorrentine Farm Experience* • *Italy & the Camorra* conversation • Vineyard experience • *Art of the Renaissance* conversation • Italian immigration conversation • Chianti cooking lesson • Olive oil mill visit
- Exclusive services of a local **Grand Circle Program Director** (assigned to no more than 42 travelers)
- **Gratuities** on your main trip for local guides and motorcoach drivers
- **Personal headset** for all included and optional tours on your main trip
- Private motorcoach land travel
- Baggage handling for 1 piece of luggage per person, including tips
- **5% Frequent Traveler Credit toward your next trip**

*Prices are accurate as of the date of this publishing and are subject to change.*

**Impressions of Italy: The Amalfi Coast & Tuscany**



## ITINERARY SUMMARY

### 1 • Depart U.S.

### 2-8 • Sorrento, Italy

Included Tours Sorrento, Herculaneum, Amalfi Coast

### 9-15 • Montecatini

Included Tours Montecatini, Florence

### 16 • Montecatini • Return to U.S.

## MAXIMIZE YOUR DISCOVERIES & VALUE

### OPTIONAL EXTENSIONS

all with FREE Single Supplements

#### Rome, Italy

PRE-TRIP: 4 nights from **\$1,495**

#### Venice, Italy

POST-TRIP: 4 nights from **\$1,595**

## WHAT TO EXPECT

① ② ③ ④ ⑤ Moderate

### Group Size

- A maximum of 42 travelers, led by a local Grand Circle Program Director

### Pacing

- 2 locations in 15 days

### Physical Requirements

- Walk 2-3 miles unassisted and participate in 2-3 hours of physical activities daily, including stairs
- Three days of this trip may require 3-4 miles of walking and 3-6 hours of optional physical activity
- 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
- We reserve the right for Program Directors to restrict participation, or in some circumstances send

travelers home, if their limitations impact the group's experience

### Terrain & Transportation

- Uneven walking surfaces, including unpaved paths, hills, stairs, and cobblestones
- Travel by 45-seat motorcoach, and public transportation that requires ability to stand up and hold handles while vehicle is in motion
- Public transportation including bus, train, boat, and funicular

### Climate

- Daytime temperatures typically range from 35-95°F all year round
- May-August are the warmest months—temperatures in July and August may reach up to 105°F with high humidity
- November-April weather can be unpredictable and change quickly within a short period of time, including snow in southern Tuscany from December-February

# Impressions of Italy: The Amalfi Coast & Tuscany

## YOUR DETAILED ITINERARY

### BEGIN YOUR TRIP WITH AN OPTIONAL PRE-TRIP EXTENSION

#### 4 nights in *Rome, Italy*

**Day 1** Depart U.S.

**Day 2** Arrive in Rome, Italy

**Day 3** Explore Rome

**Day 4** Rome • Optional pizza & gelato making lesson

**Day 5** Rome • Optional Roman Ghetto & Trastevere tour

**Day 6** Rome • Visit local farm • Transfer overland to Sorrento

#### Day 1 Depart U.S.

Depart the U.S. this evening for Naples, Italy.

#### Day 2 Arrive in Naples, Italy • Sorrento

- Destination: Sorrento
- Accommodations: Grand Hotel Cesare Augusto or similar

**Morning/Afternoon:** You'll arrive in Naples at some time today, depending on your specific flight arrangements. You'll be greeted at the airport by a Grand Circle representative who will assist you to your hotel in Sorrento, where you'll be joined by your Program Director, who can lead you on an orientation walk through the neighborhood surrounding your hotel, if you wish.

**Dinner:** On your own—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations.

**Evening:** You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

#### Day 3 Explore Sorrento • School visit • *History of Campania* conversation

- Destination: Sorrento
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Grand Hotel Cesare Augusto or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Join your Program Director and fellow travelers—including those who chose our *Rome, Italy* pre-trip extension—for an orientation briefing, and then set out for a discovery walk of Sorrento. With its romantic location on the cliffs over the Bay of Naples, Sorrento has long been the subject of songs and legends. It was here that the mythical sirens, with the beauty of their sweet singing, lured sailors to shipwreck on the rocks.

You'll see some of the sights of the city with your Program Director, such as the cathedral, Piazza Sant'Antonino, the Public Gardens, the town's quaint little alleys, and its main square, Piazza Tasso. Amble along Corso Italia, the town's main pedestrian thoroughfare, lined with picturesque shops offering food and handcrafts.

Then, you'll have the chance to visit children at a local school (in session between January–May and October–December), supported by Grand Circle Foundation. Meet the local *bambini* in their classroom, and see firsthand how your travel dollars have been put to use to provide new tools and technology to teach the children vital scientific skills. You'll also have the chance to speak with the school's faculty about the Italian education system.

**Lunch:** On your own—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations.

**Afternoon:** Spend the afternoon at leisure exploring Sorrento on your own. Before dinner, join a local expert for an **Exclusive Discovery Series** conversation about the *History of Campania*, getting an overview of the epic stories that this region of Italy has been the setting to. Campania has been the home of civilization since before the days of the Romans, and many ruins and archaeological sites still dot the landscape today—most famously, Pompeii, in the shadow of Mount Vesuvius. Modern dramas have played out here as well, including the rise of fascism, Nazi occupation, and Allied liberation during World War II.

**Dinner:** Get to know your new travel companions better over an included Welcome Dinner at the hotel.

**Evening:** You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

#### Day 4 Sorrento • Visit Herculaneum • Home-Hosted Dinner

- Destination: Sorrento
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Grand Hotel Cesare Augusto or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Discover one of the region's most impressive archaeological sites during an included morning tour of Herculaneum—a UNESCO World Heritage Site—a Roman town buried by Vesuvian ash in the same eruption that destroyed Pompeii in AD 79. It wasn't found again until 1709 when it was accidentally discovered by local workers. With the help of a local guide, you'll explore Herculaneum's well-preserved ruins, which some claim are even more impressive than those of Pompeii.

This wealthy Roman village was buried three days after Pompeii, and the ruins that were left behind were hidden beneath 50 feet of ash and mud, preserving a treasure trove of architecture, mosaics, and even papyrus scripts that would allow scholars to shed new light on Roman life. Although Herculaneum's residents had more time to flee than the unlucky souls of Pompeii, the first intact Roman skeletons in history were excavated here. The majority of the remains that were found are believed to have belonged to laborers and slaves.

You'll have about 20 minutes to further explore the ruins independently after your tour, and then return to Sorrento.

**Lunch:** On your own in Sorrento—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations.

**Afternoon:** Free for your own discoveries—ask your Program Director for recommendations. Perhaps you will choose to walk down to the



port of Marina Grande—a picturesque, hidden harbor community which has retained much of its charms due to its secluded location.

**Dinner:** This evening, enjoy a special Home-Hosted Dinner with a local family. Throughout this **Exclusive Discovery Series** event, you'll become acquainted with Italian social life as you break bread with a family in their home and taste a meal from an authentic Italian kitchen. Traditional cuisine here often incorporates the freshest seasonal ingredients from the nearby markets.

**Evening:** You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

### **Day 5 Sorrento • Sorrentine Farm Experience • Optional Lemony Sorrento tour**

- Destination: Sorrento
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Grand Hotel Cesare Augusto or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Learn more about rural Italy during an **Exclusive Discovery Series Sorrentine Farm Experience**. Head into the countryside to visit a local dairy farm, which has been owned and managed by the same family and handful of master cheesemakers for generations. The dairy's products, crafted with love and care, with a focus on sustainability and community preservation, are prized by travelers and locals alike.

Enjoy the opportunity to get to know your hosts and learn about life as a farmer in Italy, as well as the traditional techniques that they use to produce their high-quality goods.

**Lunch:** Have a farm-fresh “tasting” lunch at the estate, where you'll sample local produce, olive oil, several varieties of cheese, and a glass of wine.

**Afternoon:** Return to your Sorrento hotel in the mid-afternoon, where the rest of the day is yours to spend at leisure—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

Or, discover the secrets of Sorrento's lemons and limoncello during an Optional Tour to a lemon farm and orchard. You'll meet Osvaldo, the owner of the picturesque farm and orchard, and learn about what goes into his fruit production when he takes you to his “lemon laboratory” to show how lemons are washed, peeled, and prepared for use in Limoncello liqueur, gelato, sorbet, and even pastries. After, dine on a terrace overlooking the Gulf of Sorrento, and enjoy a three-course dinner including specialties like lemon Risotto, seabass with lemon gravy, and the regional specialty *Delizia al Limone*. And of course, you'll toast to the day's adventures with a glass of Limoncello.

**Dinner:** If you've opted to join our optional tour, you'll enjoy an included dinner at the end of your lemon farm visit. Otherwise, dinner is on your own; ask your Program Director for recommendations.

**Evening:** You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Program Director for recommendations.



## Day 6 Sorrento • Explore Amalfi Coast

- Destination: Sorrento
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Grand Hotel Cesare Augusto or similar

**Activity Note:** The Amalfi Coast ferry is subject to the weather, and will be closed during inclement conditions. If the ferry is unavailable, you will instead set off on a motorcoach drive to Scala, the oldest village on the Amalfi Coast.

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Depart for a tour of the beautiful *Costiera Amalfitana* (Amalfi Coast), sure to be a highlight of your stay in Sorrento.

On this leisurely tour, discover what is perhaps Italy's most beautiful coastline—a UNESCO World Heritage Site richly imbued with centuries-old charm. You'll enjoy a panoramic drive along the coast, traveling toward the colorful seaside town of Amalfi, romantically situated at the mouth of a deep gorge.

Then, set off on a boat ride along the ruggedly stunning shoreline, decorated by colorful fishing boats, wondrous rock formations, and villages whose buildings happily cling to the cliffs and seem to tumble toward the sea.

**Lunch:** On your own in Amalfi—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations.

**Afternoon:** Return to Sorrento.

**Dinner:** Enjoy a light dinner at the hotel.

**Evening:** Continue making independent discoveries this evening.

## Day 7 Sorrento • Explore Naples • *Italy & the Camorra* conversation

- Destination: Sorrento
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Grand Hotel Cesare Augusto or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Ride to Naples, a UNESCO World Heritage Site situated in the heart of the Campania region, and one of the world's most beautiful seaports. Naples is dramatically situated between the Mediterranean Sea and the looming bulk of Mount Vesuvius. This colorful and vibrant city epitomizes Italy's national character: cheerful but chaotic. Naples is a city of great contrasts, aware of a heritage that springs from diverse cultural influences: Ancient Greek and Roman, Norman, French, Spanish, and, of course, Italian.

Here, you'll join a local guide for a tour of this dynamic city, weaving through the network of *vicos*—little alleyways—that lend Naples much of its character. You'll also get to know its famously friendly people, renowned for their ability to make you feel like a close friend just after meeting them. The author Johann Wolfgang von Goethe famously summarized the experience of visiting this city with the quote, "See Naples and die"—meaning that after visiting, one's life would be complete. You can decide for yourself if his praise is accurate as you explore.

Your expert local guide will also offer a glimpse into a controversial aspect of local culture during an **Exclusive Discovery Series** conversation about *Italy & the Camorra*. You'll learn about this crime syndicate and their impact on Campania from a local expert with first-hand experience about the mafia's influence on the region, and about how the organization has changed in modern times.

**Lunch:** Included at a local restaurant in the city.

**Afternoon:** Enjoy some leisure time exploring Naples on your own. On the drive back to Sorrento, you'll have the option to stop and independently visit Naples' Archaeological Museum, or to continue on with your Program Director back to the hotel. One of Europe's most valuable repositories of ancient artifacts, notable exhibits in the Museum include the priceless Farnese collection of ancient Roman statuary and the many colorful treasures removed from long-buried Pompeii, Stabia, and Herculaneum. Afterwards, if you've stayed at the Museum, you'll take local transportation back to your hotel on your own.

**Dinner:** On your own in Sorrento—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations.

**Evening:** You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

### Day 8 Sorrento • Optional Pompeii tour

- Destination: Sorrento
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Grand Hotel Cesare Augusto or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Spend a full day exploring Sorrento at leisure. Or, join our optional half-day tour to the infamous ruins of Pompeii, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. You'll depart for the ruins in the morning, traveling along the scenic Sorrentine peninsula, taking in dramatic views of the countryside, cliffs, and the sea along the way. Totally buried by the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in AD 79 and not rediscovered until the 17th century, Pompeii's antiquities offer you an unparalleled view of everyday Roman life.

In the company of a local expert, walk in the footsteps of the Romans over ancient cobbles and pavement, spending a few hours at some of the most significant sites to learn how its people lived, built their homes, and conducted business.

**Lunch:** Our optional tour includes a farm-fresh lunch at an *agriturismo* farmhouse in the countryside outside Pompeii. Otherwise, lunch is on your own in Sorrento—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations.

**Afternoon:** Your optional tour ends, and you return to Sorrento early this afternoon, where you'll have the rest of the day to spend at leisure. Your Program Director can recommend free time activities.

**Dinner:** On your own—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations.

**Evening:** You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

### Day 9 Sorrento • Vineyard experience • Montecatini

- Destination: Montecatini
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Ercolini e Savi or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Bid farewell to Sorrento this morning and begin your 350-mile journey to Tuscany, your next destination.

Along the way you'll stop at a winery in Frascati, a small, family-owned vineyard for an **Exclusive Discovery Series** event. Enjoy a memorable people-to-people experience as you meet the owners, and learn about their proud wine-making tradition, which has been kept in the family for generations.

The property is ideally suited for wine production; its mineral-rich soils produce high-quality vintages, and the ancient tuff caverns beneath the land are a natural storage area for the precious wines as they age to perfection.

**Lunch:** Enjoy an included lunch at the winery, with musical accompaniment from a group of performers, who will treat you to an afternoon of classic Roman tunes.

**Afternoon:** Your ride continues as you make your way north to Montecatini, where you'll arrive in the early evening. You'll check in to your accommodations and have a little time to unwind from your journey before dinner.

**Dinner:** Included at the hotel.

**Evening:** You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

### Day 10 Explore Montecatini • *Art of the Renaissance* conversation

- Destination: Montecatini
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Ercolini e Savi or similar

**Activity Note:** The interior of Tettuccio Spa is not available during the months of November and December. The Montecatini Alto funicular only operates between the months of April and October. For the remainder of the year, a motorcoach transfer is available instead.

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Explore Montecatini's elegant and beautifully preserved Art Nouveau spa district, including a visit to Tettuccio Spa. Unlike spas that offer clients a soak in their curative waters, Tettuccio Spa is known for its drinkable mineral waters—claiming to treat a range of ailments.

As one of Europe's eleven "Great Spa Towns." Montecatini is recognized as part of a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Next, travel by funicular (when available) to Montecatini Alto, the original settlement of today's Montecatini. The wonderfully preserved medieval village is situated high above the "new" town, and offers spectacular views.

**Lunch:** On your own in Montecatini Alto—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations.

**Afternoon:** Ride the funicular again to descend back down into the main part of town.

You'll have a few hours to relax or explore on your own before an **Exclusive Discovery Series** *Art of the Renaissance* conversation. Join a local expert to learn about how Tuscany was at the vanguard of a cultural movement that would change the world.

**Dinner:** Included at a local restaurant.

**Evening:** You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

### Day 11 Montecatini • Optional Siena tour

- Destination: Montecatini
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Ercolini e Savi or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Today you can join a full day optional tour to the medieval walled city of Siena, a UNESCO World Heritage Site built on three ridges and dominating the land between the valleys of Arbia and Elsa. Siena was a rich and powerful city during the Middle Ages, and from the twelfth century into the 16th century, its banking activities and trade in wool and textiles placed it in direct rivalry with Florence. Its

influence decreased after that time, as it spent much of its energies in defense against foreign conquerors.

Today's Siena still retains the air of the Tuscan Middle Ages. The 334-foot slender Italianate tower of the Town Hall soars from the rim of the Piazza del Campo, an inclined, central square that is one of the most beautiful in all of Italy. Surrounding this square are numerous lovely palaces dating from the twelfth to 16th centuries. Here, and throughout the city, are some of the most splendid examples of Gothic architecture in Italy.

On an included walking tour this morning, you'll wander up and down Siena's cobbled lanes, passing medieval red-brick palaces decorated by elegant Gothic frames in white marble. You'll wind your way on a three-mile route through the city, also passing the palace of Monte dei Paschi di Siena—Europe's oldest bank, founded in 1472.

Awaiting you at the highest part of the city is the splendid cathedral. As you visit the interior, note the colorful frescoes in the Piccolomini Library, painted by Pietro Perugino, the mentor of Raphael.

If you choose not to join today's optional tour, the day is yours to spend in Montecatini as you please—your Program Director can offer suggestions for discovery based on your interests.

**Lunch:** Our optional tour includes lunch at a local restaurant in Siena. Otherwise, lunch is on your own in Montecatini—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations.

**Afternoon:** Optional tour travelers will have some free time to explore Siena independently before returning to Montecatini, where the rest of the afternoon is at leisure for all travelers.

**Dinner:** Included at a local restaurant.

**Evening:** You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

## Day 12 Montecatini • Explore Florence

- Destination: Montecatini
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Ercolini e Savi or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Explore legendary Florence today, a UNESCO World Heritage Site set on the banks of the Arno River. Florence came into its own as a commercial and cultural center during the 13th century, when merchants and tradesmen organized guilds that commissioned works of art to adorn their churches and palaces. It was this revival of interest in art and architecture that gave birth to the Italian Renaissance, an amazing outburst between the 14th and 16th centuries that completely changed the face of this Tuscan town. The names of the great artists of Florence define the Renaissance—Dante, Boccaccio, Fra Angelico, Donatello, Botticelli, Leonardo da Vinci, and Michelangelo.

Begin your exploration of Florence with a morning walking tour of the city, which includes the glorious square of the Duomo, where you can marvel at the marble façade of the cathedral and its remarkable octagonal dome, designed by Brunelleschi, one of the most magnificent structures of Renaissance Florence. While there, you'll also view the Gates of Paradise, impressive bronze doors that intricately depict scenes from the Bible. Continue on to the Piazza Signoria, the political center of Renaissance Florence.

**Lunch:** A light lunch will be included, featuring the opportunity to try a local delicacy: *lampredotto*, a popular street food sandwich made of tripe (the edible lining of cow intestine) slow-cooked in a broth of



onions, tomato, and other ingredients until it has the texture of tender roast beef, served on crunchy bread.

**Afternoon:** Free for your own discoveries—ask your Program Director for recommendations. You may wish to visit one of the many fine Florentine leather showrooms. The art of Florentine leather tanning has been passed down through many generations to the tanners of today. Although machinery has changed with improvements in modern technology, many of the old dyeing techniques have remained virtually unchanged.

**Dinner:** Return to Montecatini, where dinner is on your own—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations.

**Evening:** You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

### Day 13 Montecatini • Optional Pisa tour • Italian immigration conversation

- Destination: Montecatini
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Ercolini e Savi or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Enjoy a day of leisure today, making independent discoveries in Montecatini or simply unwinding at your hotel.

Or, join us on an optional tour to the city of Pisa, a UNESCO World Heritage Site that is famous for so much more than its iconic Leaning Tower. You'll explore the *Piazza dei Miracoli* (the Square of Miracles)—decorated by the stunning marble architecture of its Cathedral, the Baptistery (with its marvelous echo), and, yes, the Leaning Tower.

You'll stand beneath this famous tower, which brings to mind one of civilization's most illustrious names—Galileo Galilei, the genius who helped to found modern science. At the square's Cathedral, you can still view the lamp that inspired Galileo's theory of the pendulum. He used the vantage point of the top of Pisa's celebrated Leaning Tower to demonstrate principles of speed and velocity.

After your tour, you'll have some free time to explore Pisa independently.

**Lunch:** Included with the cost of our optional tour at a local restaurant in Pisa. Otherwise, lunch is on your own in Montecatini—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations.

**Afternoon:** Your optional tour ends, and you'll return to Montecatini, where you'll have a free afternoon for your own discoveries—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

Before dinner, take part in an **Exclusive Discovery Series** conversation about immigration in Italy. You'll learn from a local expert about how migrating population patterns are changing the face of the country, and how it affects contemporary politics.

**Dinner:** At a local restaurant.

**Evening:** You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

### Day 14 Montecatini • Lucca • Olive oil mill visit

- Destination: Montecatini
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Ercolini e Savi or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Set off for a guided tour of Lucca, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Nestled in a verdant valley, this gem of Tuscany features ancient architecture and customs that have withstood the tests of time. This can be seen most readily in the well-preserved city walls which have surrounded the city since the 17th century, when they successfully defended against the advances of Florence during the rise of the Medici—they encompass a wide expanse of red terra-cotta roofed homes, and the eye-catching Case-Torri or “Tower Houses” of wealthy families.

You’ll see the walls up close during your tour, which also takes you through Lucca’s charming piazzas, including Piazza dell’Anfiteatro, where a ring of medieval buildings outline the site of the city’s former amphitheater, which was used to hold thousands of spectators for gladiator games. Enjoy the laid-back pace of the city as you explore, and break bread with the locals during a visit to a local establishment. Following your tour, you’ll have a little time to amble around the city independently.

Next, head out into the pastoral landscape to learn more about a famous Italian culinary staple during an **Exclusive Discovery Series** visit to an olive oil mill. Here, you’ll learn about the production process that creates this famous export, and discover the various ways it can be used in cuisine.

**Lunch:** Experience the flavor of extra-virgin olive oil firsthand during a Farewell Lunch at the mill.

**Afternoon:** Return to Montecatini for a final afternoon at leisure. Your Program Director can offer recommendations on how to spend it.

**Dinner:** On your own. Your Program Director can recommend a restaurant.

**Evening:** You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

## Day 15 Montecatini • Chianti cooking lesson

- Destination: Montecatini
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Ercolini e Savi or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Head out into the Chianti countryside this morning, bound for Villa Il Leccio, a picturesque *agriturismo* estate built in the 18th century on the site of a medieval stone hill tower. Here, you’ll enjoy an **Exclusive Discovery Series** event as your host—a member of the family that has owned the villa for nine generations—leads you through a hands-on Italian cooking lesson, revealing the secrets behind preparing authentic Tuscan cuisine.

**Lunch:** Taste the fruits of your labor as you dine on your culinary creations during an included lunch at the estate.

**Afternoon:** Return to your hotel in Montecatini, where the rest of the day is free for your own discoveries—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

Early that evening, join your fellow travelers and reminisce about what you’ve discovered during your journey over an included Farewell Drink and appetizers.

**Dinner:** Enjoy an included dinner with your fellow travelers.

**Evening:** You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

## Day 16 Montecatini • Return to U.S.

- Included Meals: Breakfast

**Breakfast:** At the hotel. For early morning airport transfers, a boxed breakfast will be made available.

**Morning:** Transfer to the airport for your flight home. Or, begin your post-trip extension in *Venice, Italy*.

### END YOUR TRIP WITH AN OPTIONAL POST-TRIP EXTENSION

#### 4 nights in *Venice, Italy*

**Day 1** Overland transfer to Venice • Explore Ferrara

**Day 2** Explore Venice • Optional noble Venetian *palazzo* tour

**Day 3** Venice • Visit Burano Island

**Day 4** Explore Venice

**Day 5** Venice • Return to U.S.

## 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, and Discover credit cards. We also accept Visa and MasterCard debit cards, but it must be a debit card that allows you to sign for purchases. We do not accept American Express.

In order to correctly 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.

**Please note:** *Optional tour prices include gratuities for local guides and motorcoach drivers, are listed in U.S. dollar estimates determined at the time of publication, and are subject to change. Optional tours may vary.*

### Lemony Sorrento

(Day 5 \$130 per person)

Discover the secrets of Sorrento's lemons and limoncello during a visit to a lemon farm and orchard. You'll meet Osvaldo, the owner of the picturesque farm and orchard, and learn about what goes into his fruit production when he takes you to his "lemon laboratory" to show how lemons are washed, peeled, and prepared for use in Limoncello liqueur, gelato, sorbet, and even pastries. After, dine on a terrace overlooking the Gulf of Sorrento, and enjoy a three-course dinner including specialties like lemon Risotto, seabass with lemon gravy, and the regional specialty *Delizia al Limone*. And of course, you'll toast to the day's adventures with a glass of Limoncello.

### Pompeii

(Day 8 \$150 per person)

Totally buried by the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in AD 79, and not re-discovered until the 17th century, Pompeii's antiquities offer an unparalleled view of Roman life. Accompanied by an expert guide, you'll explore Pompeii's most significant sites and learn how its people

lived, built homes, and conducted business.

Then, enjoy an included lunch at an *agriturismo* farmhouse in the countryside.

### Siena

(Day 11 \$130 per person)

Discover the medieval walled city of Siena, Florence's great historical rival, on this full-day optional tour. Laid out over the slopes of three steep hills, Siena offers its visitors a rich tapestry of churches, monuments, and other historical sites. See the Duomo—Siena's main cathedral—and its famous square, the Piazza del Campo, during a walking tour before lunch at a local restaurant. You'll also have time to make your own discoveries before returning to Montecatini in time for dinner.

### Pisa

(Day 13 \$170 per person)

Discover the city of Pisa on this optional tour. Explore the Piazza dei Miracoli (the Square of Miracles), which includes the stunning marble architecture of its Cathedral, the Baptistery (with its marvelous echo), and, of course, the Leaning Tower. At the square's Cathedral, you



can still view the lamp that inspired Galileo Galilei's theory of the pendulum. He used the vantage point of the top of Pisa's celebrated Leaning Tower to demonstrate principles of speed and velocity.

This tour also features an included lunch at a local restaurant.

***Please note:*** Admission to the interior of the Leaning Tower is not included on this tour.

## PRE-TRIP

### Rome, Italy

#### INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

---

- » **Accommodations** for 4 nights
- » **6 meals:** 4 breakfasts, 1 lunch, and 1 dinner
- » **1 included tour:** Rome
- » **Exclusive Discovery Series event:** Olive oil mill visit
- » **Gratuities** for local guides and motorcoach drivers on your extension and all optional tours
- » Exclusive services of a local Grand Circle Program Director
- » All transfers

#### PRE-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

---

*From its marbled piazzas and ancient ruins, to the countless masterpieces displayed in museums, there may be no other city that has as many legendary expressions of beauty and history as Rome. We think you'll agree with us that, when you travel to Italy, a visit to the "Eternal City" is an opportunity not to be missed.*

##### Day 1 Depart U.S.

Depart the U.S. this evening for Rome, Italy.

##### Day 2 Arrive in Rome, Italy

- Destination: Rome
- Accommodations: NH Giustiniano or similar

**Activity Note:** 2025 will be a Holy Year in Rome, as the city celebrates the 2025 Jubilee from December 24, 2024, through January 6, 2026. This event, which occurs only once every 25 years, draws millions of pilgrims to this holy city. While this affords travelers a rare opportunity to witness a special celebration, you should also be prepared for larger than usual crowds that may affect your included activities. We also strongly recommend that you reserve any independent visits to museums or attractions in advance.

**Morning/Afternoon:** You'll arrive in Rome today, the time depending on your specific flight arrangements. Upon arrival, you'll be met at the airport and assisted to your hotel. Then embark on an orientation walk to get you acquainted with your new neighborhood.

**Lunch:** On your own—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations.

**Dinner:** On your own—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations.

**Evening:** You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

##### Day 3 Explore Rome

- Destination: Rome
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: NH Giustiniano or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** After a welcome briefing with your fellow travelers and Program Director, you will discover the city of Rome, whose historic center is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and museum *en plein air*, on a walking tour. First you'll trace back one of the oldest families tied to the Papacy through its gardens, and see how popes changed the layout of the city in the 15th and 16th centuries—from Piazza del Popolo to the Spanish Steps.

Discover the glamour of the world's best fashion designers as you stroll Via Condotti and Via Frattina, then walk to the the best preserved Roman temple through the alleys of the old city. Your walking tour will conclude at the Piazza Navona where you will experience quintessential Baroque artists. Once the stadium of Emperor Domitian, Piazza Navona was where Romans came to watch *agones* (games).

Today, it is common to see street performers here, providing entertainment for the many visitors from around the world. The piazza is one of Rome's most impressive Baroque squares, featuring architecture by Borromini and sculptures by Bernini, including the impressive Fountain of the Four Rivers.

**Lunch:** On your own—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations.

**Afternoon:** Free for your own discoveries—ask your Program Director for recommendations. You may wish to toss a coin in *Fontana di Trevi* (the Trevi Fountain) to ensure you return to the Eternal City someday.

**Dinner:** Join your fellow travelers for an included dinner at a local restaurant.

**Evening:** You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

## Day 4 Rome • Optional pizza & gelato making lesson

- Destination: Rome
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: NH Giustiniano or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Explore Rome on your own today.

**Lunch:** On your own—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations.

**Afternoon:** Continue making independent discoveries in Rome. Or, join an optional tour to a local cooking school for an introductory lesson to creating two classic Italian dishes: pizza and gelato. In the company of a master *pizzaiolo*, you'll learn the secrets behind preparing Roman-style pizza, typified by its smaller, crunchier crust, and topped with your preferred selection of fresh ingredients.

While your creation is in the oven, you'll gain insight into the process of making gelato, and learn about its similarities to—and important differences from—traditional ice cream.

**Dinner:** Travelers on today's optional tour will conclude their cooking lesson by sharing dinner together, with your handmade dishes at the center of your meal. Otherwise, dinner is on your own—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations.

**Evening:** You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

## Day 5 Rome • Optional Roman Ghetto & Trastevere tour

- Destination: Rome
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: NH Giustiniano or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Enjoy another day in Rome to make your own discoveries—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

**Lunch:** On your own—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations.

**Afternoon:** Spend the afternoon at leisure, or join an optional tour of the Ghetto and Trastevere, taking in the sites of these unique neighborhoods this afternoon.

First you'll explore the Roman Ghetto, which has been home to Rome's Jewish community for nearly 2,000 years. Then cross the Tiber River over an ancient Roman bridge to discover Trastevere—a charming neighborhood favored by modern-day and ancient artists alike.

**Dinner:** Our optional tour includes dinner in Trastevere. Otherwise, dinner is on your own—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations.

**Evening:** You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

## Day 6 Rome • Visit local farm • Transfer overland to Sorrento

- Destination: Sorrento
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Begin the ride to the cliffside town of Sorrento. On the way, you'll stop for an **Exclusive Discovery Series** visit to a local farm. Here, you'll learn about a few of the crops that are grown here, and gain insight into how they're processed and prepared to create the fresh, delicious cuisine that Italy is known for.

**Lunch:** Savor an included light lunch at the farm, featuring locally-grown ingredients.

**Afternoon:** Continue traveling to Sorrento, arriving late this afternoon, where you'll check in to your hotel. You'll join your Program Director for an orientation walk of the neighborhood, and begin your *Impressions of Italy: The Amalfi Coast & Tuscany* vacation.

## OPTIONAL TOURS

---

### Pizza & gelato making lesson

(Day 4 \$190 per person)

Drive to a local cooking school for an introductory lesson to creating two classic Italian dishes: pizza and gelato. In the company of a master *pizzaiolo*, you'll learn the secrets behind preparing Roman-style pizza, typified by its smaller, crunchier crust, and topped with your preferred selection of fresh ingredients.

While your creation is in the oven, you'll gain insight into the process of making gelato, and learn about its similarities to—and important differences from—traditional ice

cream. Conclude your lesson by sharing dinner together, with your handmade dishes at the center of your meal.

### Roman Ghetto & Trastevere

(Day 5 \$160 per person)

Spend half a day exploring two Roman neighborhoods this afternoon: the Roman Ghetto, a Jewish ghetto established in 1555 by Papal bull, and Trastevere. The Jewish Roman community has lived in this area for almost 2,000 years, and a strong sense of pride, solidarity, and cultural tradition is evident



throughout the neighborhood. Then head to Tiber Island to visit the oldest working hospital in Rome, crossing over two different bridges that date back to ancient Rome. Walk to the other side of the Tiber River over an ancient Roman bridge to discover Trastevere—with its charming, narrow cobbled streets. Enjoy free time to explore on your own before dinner at a local restaurant—included in the cost of your optional tour.

## POST-TRIP

### Venice, Italy

#### INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

---

- » **Accommodations** for 4 nights
- » **5 meals:** 4 breakfasts and 1 dinner
- » **3 included tours:** Ferrara, Venice, Burano
- » **Gratuities** for local guides and motorcoach drivers on your extension and all optional tours
- » Exclusive services of a local Grand Circle Program Director
- » All transfers

#### POST-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

---

*Continue your travel in Italy by exploring Venice, an architectural masterpiece famous for its canals and numerous bridges. Venice instills in visitors an indelible fascination, from the elegance of the Piazza San Marco to the grandeur of the Basilica. Walking its streets or floating along in one of its gondolas, the sights you encounter cast a spell that is unforgettable.*

##### **Day 1 Overland transfer to Venice • Explore Ferrara**

- Destination: Venice
- Accommodations: BW Premier Collection CHC Continental or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Depart Montecatini today, stopping on your way to Venice in the medieval walled city of Ferrara, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. A local guide will take you on a walking tour of this elegant Renaissance art town, after which you'll have time for independent exploration.

**Lunch:** On your own in Ferrara—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations.

**Afternoon:** Arrive in Venice—another UNESCO World Heritage Site—this afternoon, where you'll check into your hotel then join your fellow travelers for an orientation walk of the neighborhood.

**Dinner:** On your own—your Program Director can offer suggestions on where to dine.

**Evening:** You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

##### **Day 2 Explore Venice • Optional noble Venetian palazzo tour**

- Destination: Venice
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: BW Premier Collection CHC Continental or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Embark on a walking tour of romantic Venice, visiting the famous Piazza San Marco (St. Mark's Square), the center of the city. This square was the heartbeat of the *Serenissima* ("Serene Republic") in the heyday of Venice's glory as a seafaring republic, and the city's major attractions are centered here. It is one of the most beautiful and most photographed squares in all of Europe. Dominated by the lovely St. Mark's Basilica, the spacious square is surrounded with outdoor cafés, and is the perfect place to do a little people-watching Italian-style while sipping a cappuccino.

Ornate St. Mark's Basilica is so richly embellished that it looks like it could have been moved intact from Istanbul. Though the domed church is a conglomerate of many architectural styles, its main influence is Byzantine. Its façade is adorned with marble and mosaics that depict the life of Christ and St. Mark (whose body was smuggled into Venice in a pork barrel, to confound Muslim officials who would refuse to search anything that touched pork). Outside the basilica is the *campanile* (bell tower), which was rebuilt after it collapsed in 1902. It is now open should you want to ascend for a good view of the six cupolas of the church.

During your included city tour, you'll also view the Bridge of Sighs, which links the Doges' Palace with the cellblocks that housed prisoners condemned by Venice's Council of Ten. The "sighs" in the bridge's name stemmed from the sad laments of the numerous victims led across it to certain torture and possible death.

**Lunch:** On your own—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations.

**Afternoon:** Enjoy the afternoon to make your own discoveries. You can choose to remain longer to enjoy St. Mark's Square, perhaps exploring some of the little alleys that radiate from it. Perhaps you'll get a taste for everyday

Venetian life by pausing for some light snacks and a glass of wine at a local *bacari*, a typical Venetian coffee shop.

Or, join us for an optional tour to noble Venetian *palazzo*, a splendorous estate located on the city's Grand Canal. You'll reach the palace by public ferry, where you'll be greeted by a member of the family that has resided in this *palazzo* for generations. Together, you'll wander the palace's elaborate halls and hear about its grand history, as well as the challenges of maintaining such an expensive home on Venice's wet, unsteady foundations. Your conversation continues over prosecco and traditional Venetian canapés, offering you a firsthand opportunity to learn about the daily life of Venice's upper crust.

After the conclusion of your optional tour, you'll return to the hotel by ferry.

**Dinner:** Enjoy dinner on your own in Venice—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations.

**Evening:** You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

### Day 3 Venice • Visit Burano Island

- Destination: Venice
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: BW Premier Collection CHC Continental or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Spend the day visiting the Venetian fishing island of Burano by traveling across Venice Lagoon by *vaporetto* (public water bus). Upon your arrival, enjoy a walking tour of this colorful fishing village.

You'll also visit a traditional lace maker. The bobbin-style lace, which locals call *tombolo*, is a tradition that dates back to 1493 and has been carried on by fishermen's wives as a means of earning a small income while their husbands are away at sea. Then, enjoy free time to amble among the narrow streets and canals of Burano, where every house is painted a lively color to make them recognizable for the fishermen as they sail home.

**Lunch:** On your own—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations.

**Afternoon:** Free for your own discoveries—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

**Dinner:** On your own—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations.

**Evening:** You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

#### Day 4 Explore Venice

- Destination: Venice
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: BW Premier Collection  
CHC Continental or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** If you like, you may join your Program Director after breakfast this morning on an elective walking tour of "Hidden Venice," seeing parts of the city most visitors pass by.

Or, spend a full day to pursue your own interests in Venice. You can revisit a favorite site in more depth or continue to find new treasures. You have time to stroll through the halls of the Academia Gallery, housing a remarkable collection of paintings—masterpieces from the 14th to 18th centuries. You may want to visit the Peggy Guggenheim Museum, housed in an

old, 17th-century Customs House. Here is the eclectic private collection of works owned by Peggy Guggenheim, who lived in a Venetian palazzo for 30 years until her death in 1979.

**Lunch:** On your own—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations.

**Afternoon:** Free for your own discoveries—ask your Program Director for recommendations. Maybe you'll take a *vaporetto* ride to the Island of Lido, containing Venice's premier beach resort, for a swim in the Adriatic.

**Dinner:** Gather together with your fellow travelers for a Farewell Dinner.

**Evening:** You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

#### Day 5 Venice • Return to U.S.

- Included Meals: Breakfast

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Transfer to the airport for your flight home.



## OPTIONAL TOUR

---

### Noble Venetian *palazzo*

(Day 2 \$170 per person)

Discover a noble Venetian *palazzo*, a splendorous estate located on the city's Grand Canal. You'll reach the palace by public ferry, where you'll be greeted by a member of the family that has resided in this *palazzo* for generations. Together, you'll wander the palace's elaborate halls and hear about its grand history, as well as the challenges of maintaining such an expensive home on Venice's wet, unsteady foundations. Your conversation continues over prosecco and traditional Venetian canapés, offering you a firsthand opportunity to learn about the daily life of Venice's upper crust.

# TRAVEL DOCUMENTS & ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

---

## Your Passport

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

## Need to Renew Your Passport?

Contact the National Passport Information Center (NPIC) at **1-877-487-2778**, or visit the U.S. Department of State’s official website at **[www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov)** for information on obtaining a new passport or renewing your existing passport. The U.S. Department of State allows for passport renewal by mail or, for applicable citizens, renewal online. We advise you review the process and requirements for online passport renewal on the official website.

You may also contact our recommended visa service company, PVS International, at **1-800-556-9990** for help with your passport.

## Recommended Blank Pages

Please confirm that your passport has enough blank pages for this vacation.

- **Main trip:** You will need 2 blank passport pages.
- **Pre- and/or post-trip extension:** No additional pages needed.

## Visa Required

**We’ll provide you information with detailed instructions, application forms, and fees about 100 days prior to your departure.** In the meantime, we’re providing the information below as a guideline on what to expect. This info is for U.S. citizens only. All visas and fees are subject to change.

- **Europe (Italy):** U.S. citizens will require an online visa-waiver to enter countries in the European Union. There is no set timeline for when this requirement will start – we will contact all impacted travelers before their departure once the start date is confirmed.

## 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 visa requirements. 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](http://www.pvsinternational.org)**.

## **Traveling With a Minor?**

Traveling with a minor may require certain documentation for border crossings. For further detail on the required documentation, please contact the local embassy or state government.

## **Emergency Photocopies of Key Documents**

We recommend you carry color photocopies of key documents including the photo page of your passport plus any applicable visas, air itinerary, credit cards (front and back), and an alternative form of ID. Add emergency phone numbers like your credit card company and the number for your travel protection plan. Store copies separate from the originals.

If you plan to email this information to yourself, please keep in mind that email is not always secure; consider using password protection or encryption. Also email is not always available worldwide. As an alternative, you could load these documents onto a flash drive instead, which can do double-duty as a place to backup photos during your trip.

## **Overseas Taxes & Fees**

This tour may have taxes and fees that cannot be included in your airline ticket price because you are required to pay them in person onsite. All taxes are subject to change without notice and can be paid in cash (either U.S. or local currency).

## RIGORS, VACCINES & GENERAL HEALTH

---

### Keep Your Abilities In Mind

**Please review the information below prior to departing on this trip.** 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.

#### GROUP SIZE

- A maximum of 42 travelers, led by a local Grand Circle Program Director

#### PACING

- 2 locations in 15 days

#### PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS

- Walk 2-3 miles unassisted and participate in 2-3 hours of physical activities daily, including stairs
- Three days of this trip may require 3-4 miles of walking and 3-6 hours of optional physical activity
- 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
- We reserve the right for Program Directors to restrict participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home, if their limitations impact the group's experience

#### TERRAIN & TRANSPORTATION

- Uneven walking surfaces, including unpaved paths, hills, stairs, and cobblestones
- Travel by 45-seat motorcoach, and public transportation that requires ability to stand up and hold handles while vehicle is in motion
- Public transportation including bus, train, boat, and funicular

#### CLIMATE

- Daytime temperatures typically range from 35-95°F all year round
- May-August are the warmest months—temperatures in July and August may reach up to 105°F with high humidity
- November-April weather can be unpredictable and change quickly within a short period of time, including snow in southern Tuscany from December-February

## Health Check

Feeling healthy and confident of your mobility is essential to fully enjoy your trip. 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 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.

## No Vaccines Required

### Recommended Vaccines

At the time of writing there were no required vaccines for this trip. The CDC recommends that all travelers be up to date on their routine vaccinations and on basic travel vaccines like Hepatitis A and Typhoid, but these are suggestions only. However, this could change in future so we encourage you to check with the CDC yourself before meeting with your doctor.

## Traveling with Medications

- **Pack medications in your carry-on bag** to avoid loss and to have them handy.
- **Keep medicines in their original, labeled containers** for a quicker security screen at the airport and a better experience if you get stopped by customs while overseas.
- **Bring copies of your prescriptions**, written using the generic drug name rather than a brand name to be prepared for any unforeseen loss of your medications.

We recommend checking with the State Department for medication restrictions by country: **travel.state.gov** (Select “Find International Travel Information” then select “Country Information”; if you don’t see any medications specifically mentioned under the “Your Health Abroad” section, then you can presume major U.S. brands should be OK).

## Staying Healthy on Your Trip

### Jet Lag Tips

- Start your trip well-rested.
- Begin a gradual transition to your new time zone before you leave or switch to your destination time zone when you get on the plane.



- Attempt to sleep and eat according to the new schedule.
- Avoid heavy eating and drinking caffeine or alcoholic beverages right before—and during—your flight.
- Drink plenty of water and/or fruit juice while flying
- Stretch your legs, neck, and back periodically while seated on the plane.
- After arrival, avoid the temptation to nap.
- Don't push yourself to see a lot on your first day.
- Try to stay awake your first day until after dinner.

## Allergies

If you have any serious allergies or dietary restrictions, we advise you to notify us at least 30 days prior to your departure. Please call our Travel Counselors at **1-800-321-2835**, and we will communicate them to our regional office. Every effort will be made to accommodate you.

## Water

- Water in Italy is considered safe, but as an added safety precaution against possible stomach upsets, we recommend you drink bottled water as much as possible.
- Bottled water is usually for sale in hotels, food shops, and restaurants.
- If you're out of bottled water, hotel tap water is okay to drink, but it may taste unpleasant because of heavy chlorination.

# MONEY MATTERS: LOCAL CURRENCY & TIPPING GUIDELINES

---

## Top Three Tips

- **Carry a mix of different types of payments**, such as local currency, an ATM card, and a credit card.
- **Traveler's checks are not recommended.** They can be difficult to exchange and the commission fee for cashing them is quite high. It's more practical to view them as a last resort in the event of a special situation.
- **You will not be able to pay with U.S. dollars on this trip;** you will need euros instead.

## Local Currency

For current exchange rates, please refer to an online converter tool like [www.xe.com/currencyconverter](http://www.xe.com/currencyconverter), your bank, or the financial section of your newspaper.

**Euro Countries:** European Euro (€)

## How to Exchange Money

If you want to exchange money before your trip, you can usually do so through your bank or at an exchange office. Your departure airport in the U.S., a travel agent, or an AAA office are also possible outlets. Or you can wait and change money on the trip instead—but it might be helpful to arrive with some local currency in case you run into a bank holiday or an “out of order” ATM.

On your trip, the easiest way to obtain local currency is to withdraw funds from a local ATM. The ATM will give you local money and your bank at home will convert that into U.S. dollars.

You may be able to exchange cash at some hotels, large post offices, and money exchange offices, however they do not typically offer good exchange rates and can be difficult to find. To exchange cash, you'll usually need your passport and bills in good condition (not worn, torn, or dirty). New bills (post 2014) are best.

Please note that many banks in Europe will only exchange money for their own customers. Never exchange money on the street. All exchange methods involve fees, which may be built into the conversion rate; ask beforehand.

## ATMs

When using the ATM, keep in mind that it may only accept cards from local banks, and may not allow cash advances on credit cards; you might need to try more than one ATM or more than one card. Many banks will charge a set fee or a percentage fee each time you use a foreign ATM. We recommend that you check with your bank before you depart. Don't forget to memorize the actual digits of your card's PIN number (many keypads at foreign ATMs do not include letters on their keys—they only display numbers.)

In most countries, ATMs are widely available in major cities. If you are in a rural location, it will likely be harder to find an ATM. If you are visiting a country that has different expectation for ATMs, they will be listed below.

## Credit & Debit Cards

While traveling, most countries and major cities will accept credit cards. We suggest that you bring one or two, especially if you are planning a large purchase (artwork, jewelry). We also suggest that you bring more than one brand of card (i.e. Visa, MasterCard, American Express) if possible, as not all are accepted around the world. If you are visiting a country that does not commonly accept credit cards, they will be listed below.

**Italy:** Credit and debit cards are widely accepted in Italy. Occasionally a small “Mom and Pop” restaurant will be cash only, and street vendors or taxis usually are cash only, but most other businesses will take cards.

## Chip Cards

Many countries have adopted credit cards that have an embedded computer chip. These cards are inserted into the reader instead of swiped. The card owner then authorizes the purchase using a PIN instead of signing.

Though this technology is common in the U.S., occasionally there are machines in other countries that can’t read U.S. cards, or the machine can read the card, but asks for a PIN. This doesn’t happen often, and is nothing to worry about. You can usually resolve the situation by asking the cashier to let you sign. (If you don’t speak the language, just mime signing on your hand.) If you are not able to sign for a purchase, such as at an automated ticket booth, you can use another form of payment, such as a debit card that has a PIN.

## Notify Card Providers of Upcoming Travel

Many credit card companies and banks have fraud alert departments that will freeze your card if they see suspicious charges—such as charges or withdrawals from another country. To avoid an accidental security block, it is a good idea to notify your credit card company and/or bank you will be using your cards abroad. You can do this by calling their customer service number a week or two before your departure. Some banks or credit card companies will also let you do this online.

You should also double-check what phone number you could 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.!

## 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.

- **Grand Circle Program Director:** It is customary to express a personal “thank you” to your GCT 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. 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.*
- **Hotel Housekeeping:** Many travelers will leave the equivalent of \$1–\$2 per day, per room for the hotel housekeeping staff.
- **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:** In Italy, tipping is not customary, but many locals will round up the fare and let the driver keep the change. But a 10% tip for helping you with heavy luggage is appreciated
- **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 *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. Note that in Italy, you may see the word “coperto” on your bill. This is not a tip, but more of a cover charge for the use of the table, table cloth, napkins, etc.
- **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 about 1 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.

## AIR, OPTIONAL TOURS & STAYING IN TOUCH

---

### Land Only Travelers & Customized Air

#### Quick Definitions

- **Land Only:** You will be booking your own international flights. Airport transfers are not included.
- **Air-Inclusive:** You booked international air with us. Airport transfers are included as long as you didn't customize your trip's dates (see next bullet).
- **Customized Air:** You booked international air with us, and have customized it in some way. If you have customized your trip's dates to arrive early, stay longer, or stop on your own in a connecting city, airport transfers will NOT be included. You must also arrange your own accommodations for any additional nights. For your convenience, a preliminary list of your included hotels is available on your My Planner at [www.gct.com/myplanner](http://www.gct.com/myplanner) under "My Reservations".

#### Air Inclusive Travelers

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

- **Arrival:** Once you arrive, 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.
- **Flight Delays:** Grand Circle Travel is not responsible for flight delays or cancellations. In the unfortunate circumstance that your flight is delayed or changed, please try to reach the regional Grand Circle office (their number will be in your Final Documents) in order to make new arrangements for your transfer. Due to airline regulations our staff is not notified of flight rerouting, and our local representative won't necessarily be aware of your new arrival time. In these cases you will need to arrange your transfer by taxi to your hotel.
- **Flying with a Travel Companion:** If you're traveling with a companion from a different household, and both of you are beginning and ending your trip at the same airport on the same dates, let us know you'd like to travel together and we'll make every effort to arrange this (please note, however, that this is not always possible). If you request any changes to your flights, please be sure that both you and your companion tell us that you still want to fly together.



- **Selecting Your Seats:** If your airline allows pre-assigned seats, you will be able to select and view them directly from the airline's website after booking. Some airlines will not allow seat confirmation until your reservation is ticketed 45–30 days prior to departure, and/or they may charge a nominal fee. You may locate your itinerary on an airline's website utilizing the Record Locator Number found on the Air Itinerary in your My Planner.

## Airport Notes

**Florence Airport & Fog Delays (main trip only):** Sometimes conditions at the Florence airport are too foggy to let planes take off safely. When this happens, the airline may delay your flight until conditions improve or move it to an alternative airport, such as Bologna or Verona. Therefore, please be aware that your flight from Florence could be transferred to another airport (if so, any connecting flights would be rescheduled by the airline). This might delay or lengthen your return home. If you've arranged your own flights, please plan accordingly and make sure to confirm the both the flight and the weather forecast the day before.

**IMPORTANT — Airport Transfers from Venice (Post-trip extension ONLY):** Travelers who chose to arrange their own airport transfers should keep in mind that your post-trip extension ends in Venice, where most transportation is by water. You'll have a few options:

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

## Airport Transfers Can Be Purchased

For eligible flights, airport transfers may be purchased separately as an optional add-on, subject to availability. To be eligible, your flight(s) must meet the following requirements:

- You must fly into or fly home from the same airport as GCT travelers who purchased included airfare.

- Your flight(s) must arrive/depart on the same day that the group arrives or departs.

Airport transfers can be purchased up to 45 days prior to your departure; they are not available for purchase onsite. To learn more, or purchase airport transfers, please call our Travel Counselors at **1-800-321-2835**.

If you don't meet the requirements above, you'll need to make your own transfer arrangements. We suggest the Rome to Rio website as a handy resource: **[www.rome2rio.com](http://www.rome2rio.com)**

## Optional Tours

Optional tours are additional add-on tours that allow you to personalize your vacation by tailoring it to your tastes and needs. And if you decide not to join an optional tour? Then you'll have free time to relax or explore on your own—it's about options, not obligations.

### What You Need to Know

- All optional tours are subject to change and availability.
- Optional tours that are reserved with your Program Director can be paid for using credit/debit cards only. We accept MasterCard, Visa, and Discover credit cards; we can also take MasterCard or Visa debit cards as long as the card allows you to sign for purchases. (You won't be able to enter a PIN.)
- To ensure that you are charged in U.S. dollars, your payment will be processed by our U.S. headquarters in Boston. This process can take up to three months, so we ask that you only use a card that will still be valid three months after your trip is over. The charge may appear on your credit card statement as being from Boston, MA or may be labeled as "OPT Boston".
- Your Program Director will give you details on the optional tours while you're on the trip. But if you'd like to look over descriptions of them earlier, you can do so at any time by referring to your Day-to-Day Itinerary (available online by signing into My Planner at **[www.gct.com/myplanner](http://www.gct.com/myplanner)**).

## Communicating with Home from Abroad

### Cell Phones

If you want to use your cell phone on the trip, check with your phone provider to see if your phone and service will work outside of the U.S. It may turn out to be cheaper to rent an international phone or buy a SIM card onsite. If you want to use a local SIM, just make certain your phone can accept one.

### Calling Apps

Another option is to use a smartphone app like Skype, FaceTime, or WhatsApp. We recommend you use WhatsApp to communicate with home while abroad and with your Trip Experience Leader while onsite. You will need a Wi-Fi connection if you do not have international coverage. Other calling options include smartphone apps such as Skype or FaceTime. You will need a Wi-Fi

connection for these apps and the calls may count towards your phone plan's data allowance. Many smartphones—and some tablets or laptops—come with one of these apps pre-installed or you can download them for free from the appropriate apps store.

### **Calling Cards and 1-800 Numbers**

When calling the U.S. from a foreign country, a prepaid calling card can be useful because it circumvents unexpected charges from the hotel. Calling cards purchased locally are typically the best (less expensive, more likely to work with the local phones, etc.).

One reminder: Do not call U.S. 1-800 numbers outside the continental United States. This can result in costly long distance fees, since 1-800 numbers do not work outside the country.

### **How to Call Overseas**

When calling overseas from the U.S., dial 011 for international exchange, then the country code (indicated by a plus sign: +), and then the number. Note that foreign phone numbers may not have the same number of digits as U.S. numbers; even within a country the number of digits can vary depending on the city and if the phone is a land line or cell phone.

**Italy: +39**

## PACKING: WHAT TO BRING & LUGGAGE LIMITS

### Luggage Limits

MAIN TRIP LIMITS	
Pieces per person	One checked bag and one carry-on per person.
Weight restrictions	Varies by airline. The current standard is <b>50 lbs for checked bags</b> and <b>15 lbs for carry-ons</b> .
Size Restrictions	Varies by airline. Measured in linear inches ( <i>length+width+depth</i> ). Generally, <b>62 linear inches is the checked bag limit; carry-on limit is 45 linear inches</b> .
Luggage Type	A sturdy, fabric-sided suitcase with built-in wheels and lockable zippers is recommended.
TRIP EXTENSION(S) LIMITS	
Same as main trip.	
REMARKS/SUGGESTIONS	
<p><b>One suitcase and one carry-on bag per person:</b> 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 during bus transfers. We ask that you abide by this limit to avoid inconveniencing your fellow travelers and to avoid additional fees from the airlines. Most airlines are now charging fees to check more than one suitcase per person, even for flights to Europe or on other international flights.</p> <p><b>Luggage rules:</b> Luggage rules and limits are set by governmental and airline policy. Enforcement of the rules may include spot checks or may be inconsistent. However one thing is the same across the board: If you are found to have oversized or overweight luggage, you will be subject to additional fees, to be assessed by—and paid to—the airline in question.</p>	

#### Don't Forget:

- **These luggage limits may change.** If the airline(s) notify us of any changes, we will include an update in your Final Documents booklet.
- It's a good idea to reconfirm baggage restrictions and fees directly with the airline a week or so prior to departure. For your convenience, we maintain a list of the toll-free numbers for the most common airlines on our website in the FAQ section.

- **Baggage fees are not included in your trip price;** they are payable directly to the airlines.

## Your Luggage

- **Checked Luggage:** Consider a duffel bag or soft-sided suitcase. Look for one with heavy nylon fabric, wrap-around handles, built-in wheels, and a heavy duty lockable zipper. Due to space limitations on our motorcoaches, 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.
- **Carry-on Bag:** You are allowed one carry-on bag per person. We suggest a tote or small backpack that can be used as both a carry-on bag for your flight and to carry your daily necessities—water bottle, camera, etc—during your daily activities.
- **Locks:** For flights that originate in the U.S., you can either use a TSA-approved lock or leave your luggage unlocked. Outside of the U.S. we strongly recommend locking your luggage as a theft-prevention measure.

## Clothing Suggestions: Functional Tips

- **Travel light:** A good rule of thumb is to gather together everything you want to bring; then take half of that. Eliminate all but the essentials and start packing a few days before you leave. That way, you'll have time to think—not fret—about what you might be forgetting. To have a varied travel wardrobe, yet keep your luggage light, we recommend you select a color scheme and pack color-coordinated clothing items that can be mixed to create different outfits.
- **Consider clothing designed for travel, sports, or camping:** With modern fabrics, 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:** In today's age of informality, comfortable and informal apparel is perfectly acceptable at each of your destinations. Basic pants, shirts, walking shorts, sportswear, everyday dresses/skirts, supportive shoes, and functional outdoor clothes that are relatively easy to care for are recommended. Men do not need jackets or ties and women do not need fancy dresses.
- **Bring rain gear:** Regardless of your month of travel, rainfall is certainly a possibility. We suggest you bring a folding umbrella and waterproof shell. Water-resistant walking shoes are advantageous in case heavy downpours pass through.
- **Good walking shoes are critical:** This program features many included tours that follow steep, unpaved or cobbled routes; and even an average day of light sightseeing or shopping can put great demands on your feet. If you prefer more ankle support, take light hiking boots. In case you get caught in the rain, we suggest you bring an extra pair of walking shoes, and rain boots or galoshes. Aboard ship, you'll want non-slip shoes with rubber soles.



- **Proper attire in churches:** To satisfy dress codes for Italian churches, men and women are requested to cover their arms and legs. No shorts above the knees or sleeveless garments please. Women wearing sleeveless blouses can cover their bare arms with a scarf. It's no longer necessary for women to cover their heads. Pantsuits are now acceptable in churches.

## Seasonal Tips

- **Winter:** Bring clothes for moderate temperatures, but also take some cold weather gear—warm pants, socks, turtlenecks, fleece top or wool sweater, rainproof jacket (ideally with a zip-out insulation layer), gloves, and hat. The most practical travel wardrobe consists of items that you can wear in layers. Then you can easily add or remove a layer according to fluctuations in temperatures.
- **Spring & Summer:** Pack an assortment of seasonal garments: short-sleeve shirts and comfortable slacks or shorts for daytime; the evenings, however, can be chilly, so bring along a cotton sweater and a fleece jacket.

## What to Bring

We have included suggestions from Program Directors and former travelers to help you pack. These packing lists are only jumping-off points—they offer recommendations based on experience, but not requirements. We recommend using [www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com) and consulting the “Climate” chapter of this handbook.

Your accommodations will supply soap, body wash, and shampoo/conditioner. If you prefer a certain brand you may want to bring your own, but otherwise you can rely on what they provide. **And don't forget a reusable water bottle**—you'll need it to take advantage of any refills we offer as we are working to eliminate single-use plastic bottles on all of our trips.

## Recommended Clothing

- ☐ Shirts: A mixture of short and long-sleeved shirts to layer
- ☐ Trousers, jeans, or skirts
- ☐ Comfortable walking shoes and/or water resistant shoes
- ☐ Light rain jacket/windbreaker with hood
- ☐ Sleepwear
- ☐ Socks and undergarments
- ☐ A warm layer, such as a sweater, fleece pullover, or jacket

## Essential Items

- ☐ Daily essentials: toothbrush, toothpaste, floss, hairbrush or comb, shaving items, deodorant, etc.
- ☐ Spare eyeglasses/contact lenses and your prescription
- ☐ Sunglasses with a neck strap
- ☐ Compact umbrella
- ☐ Wide-brim sun hat with chin strap
- ☐ Pocket-size tissues
- ☐ Moist towelettes and/or anti-bacterial “water-free” hand cleanser
- ☐ Photocopies of passport, air ticket, credit cards, prescriptions for your medicines
- ☐ Electrical transformer & plug adapters
- ☐ Washcloth
- ☐ Travel-size hair dryer: Many hotels will provide hair dryers, but not all. If a hair dryer is essential to you, consider a travel-size version.
- ☐ Venice extension only: Rubber or waterproof shoes

## Medicines

- ☐ Your own prescription medicines
- ☐ Vitamins
- ☐ Cold remedies: Sudafed, Dristan, etc.
- ☐ Pain relief: Ibuprofen/naproxen/aspirin
- ☐ Laxatives: Senokot/Ex-Lax
- ☐ Stomach upset: Pepto-Bismol/Mylanta
- ☐ Allergy medicine for dusty conditions
- ☐ Anti-diarrheal (Imodium)
- ☐ Band-Aids, Moleskin foot pads

 Antibiotics: Neosporin/Bacitracin

## Home-Hosted Visits

It is customary, though not necessary, to return your hosts' generosity with a small gift. If you do bring a gift, we recommend that you bring something the whole family can enjoy, or something that represents your region, state, or hometown. Get creative and keep it small—peach jelly from Georgia, maple sugar candy from New England, orange blossom soap from California; something that can be used or used up is best. When choosing a gift, be certain to consider the local culture as well. For example, we do not recommend alcohol in Muslim countries because it is forbidden in Islam, and your hosts may be religious. Not all Grand Circle vacations include a home-hosted visit; please check your final itinerary before you depart.

## Electricity

When traveling overseas, the voltage is usually different and the plugs might not be the same shape.

### Voltage

Electricity at hotels in Italy is 220 volts. In the U.S. it is 110 volts. Most of the things a traveler will want to plug in—battery chargers, smartphones, tablets or computers—can run off both 110 and 220–240. But you should check the item or the owner's guide first to confirm this before you plug it in. Plugging a 110V U.S. appliance into 220/240V 50/60Hz service will ruin the motor. If you have something that needs 110 volts—like a shaver or a hairdryer—you can bring a transformer to change the current. (But transformers tend to burn out, so it might be better to leave whatever it is at home.)

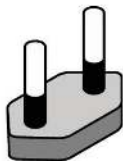
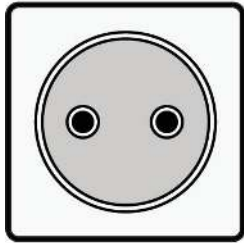
### Plugs

The shape of plugs will vary from country to country, and sometimes even within a country depending on when that building was built. To plug something from the U.S. into a local socket you'll need an adapter that fits between the plug and the socket. Although you are only traveling in one country on this trip, it may be easier to purchase an all-in-one, universal adapter/converter combo. Versatile and lightweight, these can usually be found at your local electronics goods or hardware stores. Sometimes you can buy them at large retailers too, like Target or Walmart. If you forget to bring an adapter, you might also find them for sale at the airport when you arrive at your destination.

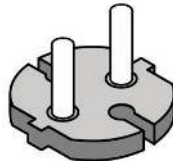
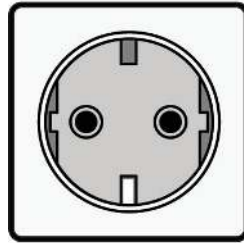
Different plug shapes are named by letters of the alphabet. Standard U.S. plugs are Type A and Type B. Here is the list of plugs for the countries on this trip:

**Italy:** C, L, or F

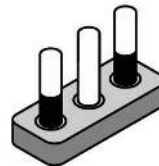
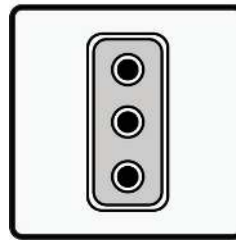
**Type C**



**Type F**



**Type L**



## CLIMATE & AVERAGE TEMPERATURES

---

**Rome, Italy:** The city of Rome has a climate similar to that of Tuscany, with temperatures averaging in the 40s and 50s during peak winter months, and the 60s and 70s in spring and autumn. Winter rains can be heavy, but periods of sunshine are also common. Summer can be very hot and humid with average temperatures ranging from 65-110 degrees, but potentially reaching into the 90s, especially during July-August.

**Venice, Italy:** Venice is situated in the flat, low-lying plains of northern Italy, where the climate features year-round rain and sunshine, hot summers, and surprisingly cold temperatures during the three winter months. Fog, frost, and snow are frequent in midwinter. Thunderstorms can pass through in autumn and spring, though they are the exception and not the rule. While “off-season” travel may involve stints of inclement weather, it rewards you with the chance to explore Venice’s museums, piazzas, and canals at a time when they are wonderfully free of the summer tourist crowds.

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

**Amalfi Coast:** The Amalfi Coast has a typical Mediterranean climate with temperate winters and very hot, dry summers. Spring and fall usher in delightful weather, with plenty of bright skies and pleasantly warm temperatures.

### Climate Averages & Online Forecast

The following charts reflect the **average** climate as opposed to exact weather conditions. This means they serve only as general indicators of what can reasonably be expected. An extreme heat wave or cold snap could fall outside these ranges. As your departure approaches, we encourage you to use **[www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com)** for a more accurate forecast of the locations you visit.



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

MONTH	SORRENTO, ITALY			VOLTERRA, ITALY (MONTECATINI)		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity	Average # of Days with Rainfall	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (avg)	Average # Days with Rainfall
JAN	55 to 38	--	14	45 to 38	78	8
FEB	60 to 39	--	13	46 to 38	77	8
MAR	65 to 43	--	14	51 to 41	74	8
APR	75 to 55	--	13	56 to 45	75	9
MAY	80 to 54	--	9	64 to 52	73 to 50	7
JUN	85 to 62	--	7	71 to 59	73	6
JUL	90 to 66	--	4	78 to 64	69	4
AUG	90 to 68	--	6	77 to 64	72	6
SEP	80 to 64	--	9	71 to 59	75	7
OCT	75 to 52	--	12	63 to 53	70 to 46	8
NOV	62 to 45	--	15	52 to 44	81	9
DEC	55 to 41	--	15	46 to 39	80	8

MONTH	ROME, ITALY			VENICE, ITALY		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity	Average # of Days with Rainfall	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity	Average # of Days with Rainfall
JAN	69 to 38	76	7	60 to 32	81	6
FEB	73 to 38	72	7	65 to 33	77	5
MAR	80 to 43	71	7	70 to 40	75	6
APR	86 to 48	70	7	81 to 48	75	8
MAY	94 to 55	70	6	95 to 63	73	6
JUN	103 to 62	65	3	100 to 75	74	9
JUL	110 to 80	63	2	108 to 80	71	6
AUG	110 to 80	64	2	108 to 80	72	6
SEP	104 to 61	70	6	100 to 75	75	6
OCT	90 to 54	74	7	81 to 51	77	7
NOV	80 to 47	78	9	65 to 42	79	6
DEC	70 to 41	77	9	60 to 33	81	6

## ABOUT YOUR DESTINATIONS: CULTURE, ETIQUETTE & MORE

---

### Your Program Director

During your exclusive Grand Circle vacation, you'll have reliable assistance available at all times from an on-site Grand Circle Travel Program Director. Your Program Director is fluent in English and can give you an inside perspective on your destinations. He or she is supported along the way by local tour guides, who guide you expertly through particular sites and cities.

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

Your Program Director will provide sightseeing trips, 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 a Program Director throughout your vacation.

### Italian Culture

Encompassing landscapes as varied as the snow-capped mountains of the Alps to the sunbaked vineyards of Sicily, it stands to reason that Italian culture would vary by region. But there are also many cultural influences shared by Italians everywhere, of course. And two of them are food and family. Italians place a great importance on *la famiglia*, and extended family members gather regularly for meals and celebrations. Lots of businesses in Italy are both family owned and family run, especially the numerous *trattorias* and *enotecas* (wine bars). And never underestimate an Italian's love of food. Many recipes are passed down through generations and they are deeply proud of their cuisine—just as they are of their country.

With vibrant villas etched into seaside cliffs and craggy mountains plunging into a cobalt sea, the Amalfi Coast is a string of romantic towns and cliff-top resorts. At the gateway to this coastal paradise lies Sorrento. It was the obligatory stop on the 19<sup>th</sup>-century "Grand Tour" of aristocratic young men and became a popular vacation spot for literary geniuses, such as Byron, Dickens, and Tolstoy. The region overall is home to some of Italy's finest hotels and restaurants.

Like all of its neighbors, the Amalfi Coast is renowned for its ancient architecture and artistic history. One of the biggest draws of the region is its abundance of ancient ruins, like Pompeii and Herculaneum, two Roman towns that were buried by Vesuvian ash during the same eruption in AD 79. Over the past two centuries, the culture of this area has been influenced by an influx of artists, writers, and composers from all over the world—from Sophia Loren, Brigitte Bardot, and Liz Taylor to Norman Douglas, Graham Greene, and Gore Vidal. Further back in time, the Amalfi Coast has drawn writers like Swede Axel Munthe, Henrik Ibsen, Goethe, and composer Richard Wagner to its shores.

The Tuscan experience is bound together through its legendary landscapes, world-renowned art, and *cucina contadina* (farmer's kitchen). Tuscany's timeless vistas are truly postcard material—from grape-laden vines blanketing its rolling hills to honey-hued medieval villages perched along the hillsides. Then, there's the art. The Etruscans and Romans left their mark with fabled sites and monuments, such as the necropolis of Populonia and the Roman Theatre in Fiesole. But it was during the Middle Ages where Florentine art really began to flourish. From sculptors like Nicola Pisano, Giovanni Pisano, and Arnolfo di Cambio to painters like Cimabue and Giotto, Tuscany was the pinnacle of artistic grandeur in Italy. Michelangelo, one of the greatest Tuscan artists, actually argued that his talent and skills were due to the "lightness" of Tuscan air. Today, these masterpieces are safeguarded in churches and museums throughout the region.

Tuscany is a gastronomic paradise, where residents spend most of their time thinking about, discussing, and consuming the fruits of their fertile land (understandably so). Tuscans show an enormous amount of pride in the quality and taste of their food and wine. From handmade pastas at a family-run *pastificio tradizionale* to locally produced wines in Chianti, Montalcino, and Montefalco, simple and honest flavors are the mark of central Italy's medieval villages and terraced countryside.

## Religious Festivals in Italy

As a deeply Catholic country, Italy celebrates many religious festivals. But the two biggest are Christmas and Easter. Christmas is celebrated much as in the U.S. but with some key differences. For example, the unofficial start of the Christmas season is the Day of the Immaculate Conception (December 8) and the end is Epiphany (January 6); the focal point of decoration is usually an elaborate nativity scene rather than a Christmas tree; and the festive meal often features fish and seafood rather than a turkey, ham, or other meat. Special foods like *panettone* cake or certain pastas may also be served at this time of year. Also different from the U.S. is when presents are opened—depending on what part of Italy you are from, it could be on Saint Lucia's Day (December 13), Christmas Day (December 25), or Epiphany, when a good witch called *la befana* brings candy to children—but only if you were good last year.

The other big festival is Easter, which is on a lunar schedule, and thus changes dates each year (although it usually falls in March or April). The kick off for the Easter season is Lent, a six-week period of penitence when practicing Catholics "give up" something they enjoy as a way of showing devotion. Lent begins with Ash Wednesday, when many Italians will go to church to receive a cross made of ashes on their forehead, which they will then wear for the rest of the day.

Note that Carnival—which is meant to blow off steam before the seriousness—comes before Lent, but is not considered a religious festival. Instead it usually involves street parties, costumes, music, masks, eating, drinking, and crowds. (Venice in particular gets *very* crowded.)

Lent ends during *Settimana Santa* (Holy Week). This runs the week before Easter, and includes the Monday after. Smaller shops or family-run restaurants may be closed during this week or on special hours. But larger or famous sites generally stay open as normal except on Easter Sunday or the Monday after. If you have your heart set on a specific attraction, we suggest you check their holiday schedule in advance to avoid disappointment. Religious places of interest, such as historic

chapels/churches, will often have special services that you are welcome to attend—even if you are not Catholic. Note that the Vatican celebrations in particular are very popular and will likely need some advance planning or involve waiting in some very long lines.

## Laundry Service

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

## Hotel Courtesy in Italy

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

## Italian Cuisine

Italy may have been unified as a nation in 1861, but its cuisine is another story—and a glorious one at that. Here, gastronomy has always been a matter of regionalism and seasonality. The country is divided up into 20 distinct regions, each with its own specialties. The good news is that there is certainly culinary overlap, and since Italians are famously passionate about food, you can enjoy many beloved regional dishes all over Italy.

The structure of a typical Italian meal is designed to stimulate your appetite, and promote moderation—along with variety. So it will begin with dishes like the following:

- **Aperitivo:** A glass of sparkling prosecco or spumante white wine.
- **Antipasto all’Italiana:** Raw vegetables served with various cheeses and salami
- **Fritto Misto:** A lightly fried seafood mix, usually with calamari, shrimp, and fish such as sardines or anchovies.
- **Crostini:** Chicken liver pate or fresh cut tomatoes served on a thin piece of toasted bread
- **Caprese Salad:** Thick slices of tomato and mozzarella flavored with fresh basil leaves, olive oil.

The first course, called Primo, comes next. Here is where you may enjoy your carbohydrates with a small dish such as:

- **Tagliatelle al Tartufo:** Long ribbons of delicate tagliatelle pasta, swirled with warm melted butter, garlic, and decadently topped with black truffle shavings and parmesan cheese
- **Ribollita:** A bean and kale soup served with toasted bread. On the second day, the soup is cooked again in a pan with olive oil, hence the meaning “boiled twice”.
- **Gnocchi alla Sorrentina:** Potato gnocchi baked in a rich and delicious tomato sauce with bubbling mozzarella cheese and fresh basil.

The main course is called *Il secondo*. This is usually a small, simply prepared dish of chicken, meat, or fish including:

- **Bistecca alla Fiorentina:** A T-Bone steak from a local breed of cow, the Chianina cattle
- **Lampredotto:** A panino stuffed with the fourth stomach of a cow and soaked in broth, with salsa Verde and black pepper from Florence
- **Polpette:** Savory and seasoned Italian meatballs.

Your meal will conclude with a *Dolce* (sweet) such as:

- **Tiramisu:** A layered confection of sponge cake, mascarpone cheese, coffee and liqueur.
- **Delizia al Limone:** Sponge cakes filled and coated with lemon custard from Amalfi Coast
- **Buccellato:** A dessert made of a sweet and soft pasty with lots of raisins and aniseed. It can be shaped like a donut or oval, per the original recipe from Lucca

*Dolci* may be served with coffee or an alcoholic digestivo such as herbal amaro or limoncello. It is meant to aid your digestion of a memorable meal, one that will certainly have been toast-worthy

## Rome in Brief

### City Layout and Details

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

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

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

### Evening Entertainment

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

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

If you want to go to the opera, ballet, or to a concert, it's best to go online in advance or ask your hotel concierge to get tickets for you. (The concierge is best if tickets are on sale at box offices only.) Here's a brief preview of entertainment possibilities:

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

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

**Concerts:** The new Concert Hall complex opened in 2002. It is called simply New Auditorium—Nuovo Auditorium (Viale Pietro de Coubertin).

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

## Local Transportation

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

**Metro:** Rome's subway is called the Metropolitana, or Metro for short, and provides the fastest and easiest means of transportation in the city. The Metro begins operating at 5:30 am, and the last train leaves each terminal at 11:30 pm. (Fridays and Saturdays it closes at 1:30 am). A big letter M indicates the entrance to the subway. Tickets, which are good on buses as well, are available from vending machines at all stations. But you can avoid standing in line at stations if you buy single tickets or books of five or ten ahead of time at newsstands and tobacco shops.

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

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



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

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

## Venice in Brief

### City Layout and Details

Venice is about two and a half miles from the Italian mainland and one and one quarter miles from the Adriatic Sea. The city is built on and around 118 islands and islets, separated by approximately 150 small canals. These small land clusters are joined together by some 400 bridges. The three largest and most historically significant bridges are the Rialto, Accademia, and degli Scalzi, each of which crosses the Grand Canal. The city has only one main piazza—San Marco—and it bustles all day long. Most visitors are primarily interested in seeing San Marco, with its St. Mark's Basilica and Doge's Palace, but there's much to see elsewhere if you are game for walking. Shoppers will want to explore along the Mercerie, which leads out of the piazza San Marco and serves as the city's major shopping artery. It eventually leads to the Rialto, site of the market area.

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

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

### Evening Entertainment

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

## Local Transportation

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

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

**Gondola:** If you opt for a gondola ride, first agree on the price and the length of the trip. Two major stations at which you can hire gondolas include piazza San Marco and Ponte Rialto. *TIP: In 2019, the official price for a 30 minute gondola ride was set as 80 euros, but may cost more during the evening or if music is included.*

**On foot:** By far, the easiest way to explore Venice is on foot. All the locals walk, too. Because the city has 400 bridges with stairs, bicycles are impractical.

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

## Shopping: What to Buy, Customs, Shipping & More

There may be scheduled visits to local shops during your vacation. There is no requirement to make a purchase during these stops, and any purchase made is a direct transaction with the shop in question, subject to the vendor's terms of purchase. Grand Circle is not responsible for purchases you make on your trip or for the shipment of your purchases.

### Returns

If you discover an issue with an item, you should contact the vendor directly. If the shop is outside the country, you should expect that any resolution will take longer than it would in the U.S. We recommend that you keep a copy of all your receipts, invoices, or contracts, along with the shop's contact information. Keep in mind, local practice may vary from the standards you are used to, so don't assume that you have a certain number of days after the purchase to speak up or that you are guaranteed a refund.

## Crafts & Souvenirs

### Italy

Popular souvenirs include leather goods, silk ties, knitwear, gold jewelry, ceramics, straw goods and other handicrafts, small cabinets, and jewelry boxes. Each region in Italy has its specialties. You'll also see many different items made from olive wood or Carrara marble; just remember that any marble items you purchase should be put into your checked luggage for the flight home. (If you put them in your carry-on, they may be confiscated by security as "weapons".) In Italy, a Value Added Tax is levied on most articles, services, and meals, and ranges from 4% to 22%.

Depending on how much you spend on certain goods in specially marked Tax Free Shopping stores, you may be eligible for a partial refund of this tax. Ask the shopkeeper, salesperson, or our local staff for details. Be sure to save all receipts and the special Global Tax Refund forms for Customs, as receipts alone are not enough.

## U.S. Customs Regulations & 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](http://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.

## DEMOGRAPHICS & HISTORY

---

### Italy

#### Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 116,348 square miles
- **Capital:** Rome
- **Languages:** Italian is the official language; German, French, and Slovene are also spoken in towns near the borders of Austria, France, and Slovenia.
- **Ethnicity:** Italian, with small clusters of German-, French-, and Slovene-Italians in the north and Albanian- and Greek-Italians in the south
- **Location:** Italy is bordered by France, Slovenia, Austria, Switzerland, the Ligurian Sea, the Tyrrhenian Sea, the Ionian Sea, the Adriatic Sea, and the Mediterranean Sea.
- **Geography:** Italy lies in southern Europe and includes the Mediterranean islands of Sicily, Sardinia, and several other small islands. 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. Sicily enjoys mountains in the north and east, a vast central plateau, and a fertile coastline dotted with sea-level resort towns.
- **Population:** 58,853,482 (estimate)
- **Religions:** Christian 80% (overwhelming Roman Catholic), Atheists and Agnostics 20%, Muslims estimated at less than 2%
- **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: Italy

In addition to the holidays listed below, Italy celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit [www.timeanddate.com/holidays](http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays).

01/01 New Year's Day

01/06 Epiphany

04/25 Liberation Day

05/01 Labor Day

06/02 Republic Day

08/15 Assumption of Mary

11/01 All Saints' Day

12/08 Feast of the Immaculate Conception

12/25 Christmas Day

12/26 St. Stephen's Day

## Italy: A Brief History

Italy proudly wears the mantle of Rome, the polity from which so much of Italy's historical, cultural, and religious heritage has derived. But even though the Romans were the first to unify the peninsula, they were not the first to dominate it. That honor goes to the Etruscans, whose empire, Etruria, reached its zenith in the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC. It was centered between the Arno and Tiber rivers, mostly in Tuscany. The Etruscans were farmers, miners, seafarers and warriors, but they were riven by factionalism and in 509 BC, their last king was tossed out by Ligurian-Latin nobles in the small town of Rome. Tired of monarchs, they created the first Roman Republic.

Etruscan culture disappeared by the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, but the Romans were quick to appropriate many aspects of the Greek culture that had taken root in southern Italy and Sicily, where there were Hellenic colonies called "Magna Graecia." As the colonies were absorbed, so were Greek religion, architecture, and the basic tenets of democracy. During the 1st century BC, Julius Caesar defeated Gaul, making Rome the ruler of the entire Mediterranean world. After Caesar's assassination in 44 B.C., his nephew Octavian, later called Augustus, became Rome's first official emperor. The capital became an architectural showcase, and new territories stretched across Europe into Asia Minor, existing under a "Pax Romana" that brought prosperity and stability.

Pax Romana declined in the 3rd century A.D. thanks to inept and corrupt emperors, and attacks by outside barbarians. Rome eventually embraced Christianity in 313 under Constantine I, who established an eastern capital in Constantinople. But splitting the Rome into western (Roman) and eastern (Byzantine) halves did not halt the empire's demise. The eastern Roman empire fell in 476, and though the Byzantine half survived, it never regained the full might of Rome. In 800, Italy was briefly reunited under Charlemagne, but soon disintegrated into squabbling kingdoms.

Italian culture peaked during the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>-century Renaissance. The independent city-states formed a delicate balance of power, with ruling families (such as the Sforzas, Borgias, and the Medicis) funding a golden age of art, invention, and intellectual activity that produced some of the greatest figures of Western civilization—Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Dante Alighieri, Brunelleschi, Galileo, and others. It did not, however, stop the rival families from fighting.

By the 19<sup>th</sup> century, many Italians believed that they could function as a single nation, a belief spearheaded by the general Giuseppe Garibaldi. Independence was declared in 1861, and by 1870, the nation was consolidated under King Victor Emmanuel II. Italy was ruled as a monarchy and joined the Allies in World War I. But the 1920s ushered in a dark era as Benito Mussolini organized discontented Italians into the Fascist Party to “rescue Italy from Bolshevism.” What he delivered was a totalitarian state. Mussolini joined with Hitler and fought the Allies during World War II, during which 400,000 people were killed, hundreds of thousands were left homeless, and the economy was ruined. In 1945, Mussolini was captured and killed by partisans.

Italy was again declared a republic in 1946, but remained seriously divided during the postwar era by political extremes. Governments rose and fell, and in the 1970s, a series of terrorist acts by the left-wing Red Brigades threatened stability. By the early 1980s, the terrorists had been suppressed, but public discontent spilled into the 1990s as inflation and ongoing scandals involving public officials and the Mafia altered Italian politics. Parties dissolved, new ones formed, and new alliances emerged. This led to the election of media mogul Silvio Berlusconi as Prime Minister in 1994. But within a year, Berlusconi was forced to resign. He ran again in 2001 and was reelected, setting up a pattern that repeated for more than a decade: Berlusconi has been Prime Minister three separate times between 1994–2011, and continues to remain a political force despite having been convicted of tax fraud.

The previous Prime Minister, independent Giuseppe Conte, was elected in 2018 and heads up a populist coalition. Among his accomplishments have been the introduction of a national guaranteed minimum income, the nationalization of several companies, stricter immigration policies, and the western world’s first national lockdown in response to COVID-19. The current Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, Italy’s first female Prime Minister, was sworn in on October 22nd, 2022. Meloni is a member of the right-wing, national-conservative party, Brothers of Italy, a party that is considered to be the most right-wing party in power in Italy since World War II.



## RESOURCES

---

### Suggested Reading

#### Tuscany

***A Culinary Traveller in Tuscany: Exploring and Eating off the Beaten Track*** by Beth Elon (2006, Food) Combining travel and food, this book is half guidebook (where to eat in small towns throughout Tuscany) and half cookbook (recipes from those small towns).

***Under the Tuscan Sun: At Home in Italy*** by Frances Mayes (1996, Memoir/Travel Narrative) The true-life story of a wealthy American who falls in love with a dilapidated farmhouse in Tuscany and vows to restore it. Unlike the movie, the book focuses a lot on daily life and the renovations process, rather than romance.

***The City of Florence: Historical Vistas and Personal Sightings*** by R.W.B. Lewis (1994, Culture) A historic portrait with insight into the city's influence on modern Western Culture and its civil legacy from the Middle Ages. Includes commentary on the Arno, Duomo, Ponte Vecchio, Santa Croce, and other landmarks.

***Within Tuscany: Reflections on a Time and Place*** by Matthew Spender (1993, Travel Narrative) Sculptor Matthew Spender, whose work was featured in the movie *Stealing Beauty*, captures the essence of the Tuscan people, art, and culture in this delightful travel narrative.

***The House of Medici: Its Rise and Fall*** by Christopher Hibbert (1974, History) Portrays the Medici's personal lives and political squabbles, and captures the workings of Renaissance city-state politics.

#### Venice

***History of Venice*** by John J. Norwich (1989, History) The author skillfully manages to compress 1,000 years of Venetian history into one book.

***The World of Venice*** by Jan Morris (1960, Travel Account) A new edition of a classic that blends history, social commentary, and personal travel experience.

#### Italy

***Princes of the Renaissance*** by Mary Hollingsworth (2021, History) An exploration of the lives and times of the aristocratic elite whose patronage sparked the art and architecture of the Renaissance in fifteenth and sixteenth century Italy.

***Absolute Monarchs: A History of the Papacy*** by John Julius Norwich (2011, History) A deeper look into the most significant popes in history and what they meant politically, culturally, and socially to Rome and the rest of the world.

***La Bella Figura: A Field Guide to the Italian Mind*** by Beppe Severgnini (2007, Nonfiction/Humor) An Italian columnist and best-selling author journeys through his homeland while providing hilarious observations at the beautiful face Italy shows to the world, and the chaotic, garrulous, and often contradictory impulses that lie behind it.

***The Monster of Florence*** by Douglas Preston and Mario Spezi (2008, Non Fiction) A remarkable true story by best-selling author Douglas Preston who, with Italian investigative journalist Mario Spezi, try to track down the identity of a serial killer known as the Monster of Florence.

***History*** by Elsa Morante (1974, Fiction) A half-Jewish, Roman mother tries to survive in WWII Rome with her two sons. Though the main characters are fictional, each chapter opens with an factual account of real events that happened when the action takes place.

## Suggested Films & Videos

### Italy

***The Life Ahead*** (2020, Drama) At 86, Sophia Loren makes her first screen appearance in ten years in this Netflix original, filmed in Puglia. And it's a stunner. She plays Madame Rosa, a Holocaust survivor who takes in the children of local sex workers. A neighbor asks her to care for Momo, a Senegalese refugee whose delinquency may be too much for Rosa, whose own tormented past is catching up to her.

***The Tourist*** (2010, Thriller) Beautiful Elise (Angelina Jolie) has a mysterious off-screen lover, Pearce, who has fled England and is wanted by both Scotland Yard and the mob. He tells Elise to entrap an unwitting tourist (Johnny Depp), who will be mistaken for Pearce (who is rumored to have altered his appearance), and arrested in his place. This convoluted caper plays out beautifully in Venice's mysterious alleys, romantic canals, and opulent palaces.

***Rome*** (2005-07, Television Series) This multiple Emmy-winner from HBO deftly weaves the stories of fictional and real characters (Julius Caesar, Octavian, Marc Antony, Cleopatra, etc.) during Rome's 1<sup>st</sup> century BC transition from a republic to an empire. Outstanding production values and a stellar cast.

***The Merchant of Venice*** (2004, Drama) Al Pacino gives us one of the most masterful portrayals on stage or screen of Shakespeare's tragic moneylender, Shylock. He receives strong support from Jeremy Irons and Joseph Fiennes, and Venice itself, where much of the production was filmed. The city looks so enticing, it's a wonder that Pacino did not chew up the scenery.

***Life Is Beautiful*** (1997) Roberto Benigni is the lead actor and director of this heart-wrenching comedy/drama about a Jewish Italian bookshop owner in Mussolini's Italy who tries to shield his son from the horrors of a Nazi concentration camp. Italian with English subtitles.

## Useful Websites

**Grand Circle Forum** (tips from previous travelers)

[www.gct.com/forum](http://www.gct.com/forum)

**Grand Circle Frequently Asked Questions**

[www.gct.com/faq](http://www.gct.com/faq)

**International Health Information/CDC  
(Centers for Disease Control)**

[www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel)

**Electricity & Plugs**

[www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/  
plugs-and-sockets](http://www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/plugs-and-sockets)

**Foreign Exchange Rates**

[www.xe.com/currencyconverter](http://www.xe.com/currencyconverter)  
[www.oanda.com/converter/classic](http://www.oanda.com/converter/classic)

**ATM Locators**

[www.mastercard.com/atm](http://www.mastercard.com/atm)  
[www.visa.com/atmlocator](http://www.visa.com/atmlocator)

**World Weather**

[www.intellicast.com](http://www.intellicast.com)  
[www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com)  
[www.wunderground.com](http://www.wunderground.com)

**Basic Travel Phrases** (80 languages)

[www.travlang.com/languages](http://www.travlang.com/languages)

**Packing Tips**

[www.travelite.org](http://www.travelite.org)

**U.S. Customs & Border Protection**

[www.cbp.gov/travel](http://www.cbp.gov/travel)

**Transportation Security**

**Administration (TSA)**

[www.tsa.gov](http://www.tsa.gov)

**National Passport Information Center**

[www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov)

**Holidays Worldwide**

[www.timeanddate.com/holidays](http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays)

## Useful Apps

### **Flight Stats**

Track departures, arrivals, and flight status

### **LoungeBuddy**

Get access to premium airport lounges around the world

### **Timeshifter**

Personalized tips for avoiding jetlag, based on neuroscience and your own data

### **GoogleMaps or Maps.me**

Maps and directions anywhere in the world

### **Triposo**

City guides, walking maps, and more – and it works offline

### **Rome2rio**

Where to go, what to see, and what to do in more than 160 countries

### **Flush or Sit or Squat**

Find a clean toilet anywhere

### **Uber or Bolt or Grab**

Ride sharing around the world

### **Visa Plus and Mastercard Cirrus**

#### **ATM locations**

Shows the location of the nearest ATM in your network

### **TunnelBear**

Provides a secure VPN (virtual private network) that will encrypt your browsing data when you use a public WiFi network

### **What's App or Skype or Signal**

WiFi calling anywhere in the world

### **Duolingo, FLuentU, or Babbel**

Learn dozens of foreign languages

### **Google Translate**

Fast and simple translations

### **XE**

Currency conversions

### **SizeGuide**

Clothing and shoe sizes in all countries

### **Best Units Converter**

Converts currency, mileage, weights, and many other units of measurement

### **Happy Cow**

Locate vegan and vegetarian eateries in 195 countries

### **Eatwith**

Dine with locals all over the world

### **Meetup**

Connects you with locals who share your interests

### **Skyview**

Identifies constellations and heavenly bodies

### **Travello**

Find travel friends on the road

### **TripWhistle**

Maps your location and provides emergency numbers for police, medics, and more

### **GeoSure**

Safely navigate neighborhoods around the world

### **Tourlina**

For women only, it connects you with other female travelers

### **ALIX for One**

Created by and for women, it identifies solo-friendly dining spots in major international cities

### **Chirpey**

For women only, connect with other women, find out what's safe, meet up, and more



Arrival/Departure  **2**  
 Nights at destination  
 Included Tour   
 Optional Tour   
 Motorcoach Route 

**PRE-TRIP EXTENSION**

 **4** Rome  
 Tyrrhenian Sea  
 ITALY

**POST-TRIP EXTENSION**

Venice  **4**  
 Ferrara  
 Adriatic Sea  
 Montecatini  
 ITALY



# SHARE YOUR TRAVEL EXPERIENCES

We invite you to share your videos, slideshows, and photos of your past Grand Circle vacations to help inspire your fellow travelers. Go to [www.gct.com/myplanner](http://www.gct.com/myplanner) to upload your photos or video of at least 7 minutes in length and they may be featured on our website.

## Most Popular Videos, Slideshows & Photos from our Grand Circle Vacations Created by our Travelers



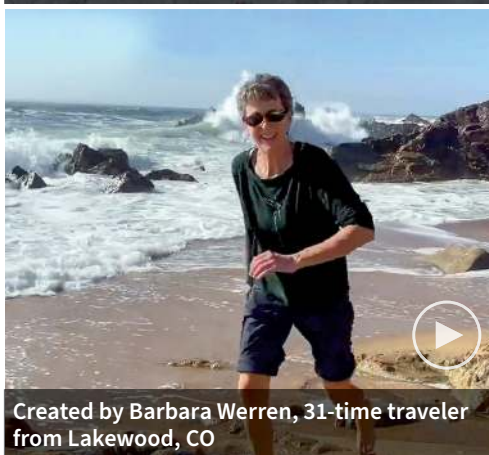
Submitted by Paul Motyka, 11-time traveler  
from Acton, MA



Submitted by Kay Gevedon, 3-time traveler  
from Mt. Sterling, KY



Submitted by David Woods, first-time  
traveler from Rockport, TX



Created by Barbara Werren, 31-time traveler  
from Lakewood, CO



Created by Sharon Fleury, 8-time traveler  
from Poughkeepsie, NY



Created by Susan Karski, 5-time traveler  
from Wimauma, FL



# GRAND CIRCLE TRAVEL®

1-800-221-2610 | [www.gct.com](http://www.gct.com) | CONNECT WITH US:

