

Classic Italy 2014

14 days

Day 1. Arrive in Naples and head to Sorrento

Our most comprehensive tour of Italy begins at 6:00 PM at Grand Hotel Excelsior Vittoria. A transfer is included from Naples International Airport to Grand Hotel Excelsior Vittoria in the southern resort town of Sorrento. Your historic hotel – family owned and operated since 1834 – overlooks the beautiful Gulf of Naples and the powerful Mt. Vesuvius. Get to know your fellow travelers at a welcome cocktail reception and dinner.(D)

Day 2. A drive along the spectacular Amalfi Coast

Unhurried drive along the Amalfi Coast, one of Europe's most impressive shorelines. Stop in Positano and visit Amalfi, where some medieval dwellings date back to the 10th century, and Ravello, perched on towering cliffs above the sea. Upon your afternoon return you can explore Sorrento's piazzas, its old Roman streets and narrow alleys as you please, spending the free evening as you wish and enjoying dinner on your own.(B,L)



Day 3. Explore Pompeii, then on to the Eternal City of Rome

Today, exploration of an ancient community captured in time – the excavated ruins of the Roman city of Pompeii, buried in volcanic ash when Mt. Vesuvius erupted in 79 AD. Walk through city streets with a local expert, where you'll discover excellently preserved ancient architecture and artifacts that portray how daily life was in this 1st-century city. Continue on to remarkable Rome, where you'll spend your next three nights at The West In Excelsior, one of the most prestigious addresses on the renowned Via Veneto.(B,L,D)

Day 4. Rome – After-hours Vatican Museums visit

Your sightseeing in Rome is highlighted by an after-hours guided visit to the Vatican Museums and the Sistine Chapel (subject to availability, and day of the tour may vary).



This after-hours visit means you'll avoid the long lines and the usual crowds found earlier in the day; the experience is comfortable when you explore the treasures in the Vatican Museums at your own pace. See the Candelabra Gallery, Map Gallery, and the Tapestries. In the Sistine Chapel, you'll admire Michelangelo's masterpiece frescoes adorning the chapel's ceiling – and be able to contemplate all that you can see in quieter surroundings. It's going to be a true highlight on this memorable tour of Italy... one that you'll remember forever.(B)



Day 5. The Colosseum, St. Peter's & more in the Rome of the Caesars

A sightseeing excursion begins the day in Rome, once the virtual capital of the ancient world and now Italy's capital city. Tour of the 2,000-year-old Colosseum; then see Circus Maximus, the 4th-century BC stadium where chariot races were held, and the ruins of the Imperial Palace. View the Roman Forum from above, then return to the microstate of Vatican City for a tour of St. Peter's Basilica to view its art and architecture, and explore St. Peter's Square. Pursue your own passions in Rome during the afternoon. You'll get an authentic taste of Italian cuisine tonight, having a family style dinner at a local restaurant in Rome.(B,D)

Day 6. Orvieto's Duomo and a wine tasting in Torgiano

Journey to Umbria region until the town of Orvieto, set on a 984-foot-high plateau overlooking vineyards below. Visit the Duomo of Orvieto, a notable Romanesque-Gothic cathedral built over a span of 300 years. After a trattoria lunch near Piazza del Duomo and some time to explore, continue through the wine-producing regions of Umbria. Arrive in Torgiano, a small village in the Tiber Valley, and your home for the next two nights, Le Tre Vaselle. The present-day hotel is a carefully renovated 17th-century country villa of which the key elements have been preserved – thick walls, wooden beams, terracotta floors, broad stone fireplaces, antique furniture and handwoven fabrics – with its own private winery. Warm hospitality, elegant decor and exquisite cuisine are reminiscent of the aristocratic country houses of centuries past. Tonight, you'll attend a wine tasting and sample the vineyard's grapes in the osteria.(B,L,D)



Day 7. Back in time in old Assisi – and a chef shares secrets

Drive to Assisi, a well-preserved medieval hill town designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site for its art and architecture, and the hometown of St. Francis, the revered patron saint of Italy and founder of the Franciscan order. Visit the Basilica di San Francesco, built to honor Assisi's beloved saint and favorite son and his final resting place. Gaze at the basilica's impressive 13th- and 14th-century frescoes, some of Italy's finest paintings, and enjoy some free time in the center of town. This evening, return to Torgiano, where you'll discover the secrets of great Italian cuisine by a demonstration from an Umbrian chef who shares insights into the nuances of Italian cooking – another highlight of your Italy tour! (B,D)

Day 8. Traces of Tuscany's medieval days in San Gimignano & Viareggio

A trip through Tuscany, where for centuries the beauty of nature has blended with the cleverness of mankind, is pure enchantment; your travels through the rolling Tuscan hills will take you through golden landscapes dotted with olive and fig trees. Arrive in the hilltop town of San Gimignano, one of its gems. Medieval towers, built in the 12th century by the nobility, are visible from afar. Stroll along the quaint streets and visit Piazza della Cisterna, one of Italy's most picturesque town squares. Continue your journey through lush Tuscan countryside to the seaside resort town of Viareggio, in Cinque Terre, for an overnight stay. (B,D)



Day 9. Cinque Terre's seaside storybook villages

Cinque Terre territory, which includes five picture-book fishing villages nestled between the Mediterranean's blue waters and the rugged coastal mountains was accessible only by sea for hundreds of years. Travel by train through the mountains to one of the villages, where you'll get a look at daily life – from the colorful fishing boats home from the sea, to the wine, olives, and citrus fruit produced locally. You'll have some time to explore the cobblestone streets and alleyways, perhaps sampling the unique flavors of the local cuisine for lunch. Cruise along the Mediterranean shores of the Italian Riviera where views of these centuries-old Cinque Terre villages, set on rocky bluffs hemmed in by steep cliffs, are a knockout! Journey on to the Renaissance city of Florence for a three-night stay in the heart of the city.(B,D)

Day 10. Become an art aficionado in Renaissance Florence

A briefing by an art history lecturer precedes a walking tour of Florence and a guided visit through the collections of works by many of the greatest artists of the 14th and 15th centuries – including Michelangelo’s famous sculpture of David and paintings by Botticelli, Uccello, Ghirlandaio, del Sarto and others – at Galleria dell’Accademia. Flourishing for more than four centuries, the world-renowned institution was established in 1563 as the first art school in Europe. You’ll have time on your own in Florence this afternoon; your hotel is right in the heart of the city, which makes it easy to explore! (B)



Day 11. Masterpieces of the Uffizi in Florence

Join a local expert for a guided tour of the Uffizi Gallery, Florence's extraordinary art museum founded by the Medici family in the 16th century; it can be rightfully called the oldest art gallery on Earth. Admire some of the world's greatest art masterpieces on display within its walls, including works by Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, Michelangelo, Botticelli, and more. The remainder of the day can be spent as you please; you may want to visit the Pitti Palace or the Medici Chapels, or stroll across the Ponte Vecchio to the lovely Boboli Gardens.(B)



Day 12. By Eurostar to Venice for St. Mark's, a gondola serenade & more

One of the things that guests like most about our Italy tours is traveling by different modes of transportation; Classic Italy continues today with a journey by the sleek, high-speed Eurostar train from Florence to Venice. Transfer by canal boat to your hotel, conveniently located near St. Mark’s Square;

after lunch, embark on a walking tour. Visit St. Mark’s Basilica as well as the sumptuous Doge’s Palace, once the official residence of the elected officials of the Venetian Republic. You’ll also indulge in the quintessential Venetian experience, a serenade aboard a gondola on the canals. Dinner tonight is on your own in Venice, a city embraced by the most popular Italy tours for its many fine restaurants! (B,L)

Day 13. The romance of Venice, as you please

The entire day is free to do as you please in Venice – and to say that you have a lot of choices is an understatement. You might decide to visit the museums, an eclectic group housing some of the world’s most famed art; stroll the winding, narrow streets that lead to countless bridges; or perhaps you might choose to take a boat to one of the islands in the Venetian Lagoon, such as Murano,



Burano or Torcello, where centuries-old crafts and a kaleidoscope of color are found... This evening, join us for a farewell cocktail reception and dinner that marks the end of this Italy tour.(B,D)



Day 14. Ciao & homeward bound

Italy tours ends in Venice. Fly home anytime; a transfer is included from The West In Europa & Regina in Venice to Venice's Marco Polo Airport. You should allow a minimum of

3 hours for flight check-in.(B)