

## **ITALY WITH FRIENDS - SCENIC ITALY TOUR**

### **October 11 - 22, 2018**

**(Itinerary is subject to change and variations with and/or without notice.)**

Day 0 - Depart USA - Wednesday, October 10, 2018 - You will fly into Milan's Malpensa airport. (Remember you will arrive in Europe the day after you depart the USA.)

Day 1 - Arrival Day - Benvenuto! - Welcome to Italy - Thursday, October 11, 2018

Welcome to Italy! Arrive into Milan Malpensa Airport for pickup and transfer by 2PM to the town of Stresa, which sits on the banks of Lake Maggiore, one of the most beautiful spots in Italy. Lake Maggiore is ringed by mountains and dotted with the Borromeo islands. Here you will have time to relax and enjoy the natural beauty that surrounds you from your hotel balcony or from the wonderful rooftop terrace of Hotel Palma. We will explore the small town of Stresa and enjoy a welcome dinner that you will remember forever. We will hop a boat for Isola del Pescatori, or Fisherman's island. Here we will dine under the stars and enjoy delicious food and wine of the Piedmont region. (D) Light

Day 2 - Lago Maggiore and the lakeside village of Stresa - Friday, October 12, 2018

You will have the whole day to explore this magical setting. Why not take a ferry ride on the lake and visit the Borromeo Islands, with a stop at Isola Bella where you find the amazing 17th century Palazzo Borromeo. You can tour inside the palazzo and stroll the grounds, maybe even see the white peacocks. You can ride a cable car up into the mountains and hike back down. You are only a train ride away from Milano, the capital of Lombardy or from Lugano in Switzerland. You can find many options of how to spend your day. (B) Light to Strenuous, your choice

Day 3 - Lago Como and Lago Garda, Saturday, October 13, 2018

Today we start with an excursion to nearby Lake Como. Lake Como is a hazy, lazy lake lined with lovely villas, and crowned with snowcapped mountains. It has been the home to the rich and famous and a major holiday destination for centuries. We will visit the town of Como, known for its silk production. From here you can hop a ferry to visit other sites and towns on the lake. Bellagio, self-proclaimed "Pearl of the Lake" is beautiful. You will have plenty of time to immerse yourself in this beautiful setting.

Then we are off to the largest of the northern Italian lakes, Lago Garda. The town of Sirmione sits on a tiny peninsula jutting out into the lake. This medieval village is fun to explore and a visit to the Scaliger Castle is a must. We will spend the night here and enjoy dinner together. (B) (D) Moderate

Day 4 - Venice, La Serenissima - Sunday, October 14, 2018

After some time to enjoy Sirmione, we will travel into the Veneto region. The Veneto region is famous for many delicious wines such as Soave, Bardolino, Amarone, Valpolicella and of course the bubbly Prosecco. We will do some wine tasting in the pretty walled town of Soave.

Then we are off to Venice, known as "La Serenissima", the most serene. Many first-time visitors are often stirred deeply by this almost fantasy world unlike anything they have ever seen before. We will enjoy a walking tour through the back streets of Venice visiting the Rialto Bridge to St. Mark's Square. Napoleon referred to this square as "the most beautiful drawing room in Europe". St. Mark's Basilica and the Doge's Palace are both located on this beautiful square. Tonight, we will enjoy a welcome dinner at a restaurant along a quiet canal. (B) (D) Moderate

#### Day 5 - The Pleasure of Getting Lost in Venice - Monday, October 15, 2018

We will dive right into the historic center of what was for centuries Europe's top superpower, with a visit inside St. Mark's Basilica and its museum located on St. Mark's Square. We will then walk over the Rialto Bridge to visit the Pescheria or fish market. The open-air stalls have the catch of the day and you will see fish like you have never seen before. Find eels, scallops, and crustaceans with five-inch antennae. This is the Venice that has existed for centuries.

The rest of the day is free for you to visit Venice's other famous sights or to get delightfully lost in the back lanes of this magical island. I am sure you will want to take that gondola ride sometime during your visit. Also, do not forget that Venice has some of the best and most unusual shopping in Italy. You may also wish to take a boat ride to one of the islands like Murano to see the glass blowing exhibits. (B) Moderate

#### Day 6 - Verona, Shakespeare's Fair City and Castello Bevilacqua - Tuesday, October 16, 2018

We leave Venice and travel to the fair city of Verona. Verona is filled with wonderful sights. Some of the best ancient Roman sights north of Rome can be found here, including the "pink" marble Colosseum. Verona was the setting for the most famous love story in the English language, Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet.

There will be plenty of time to explore all the sights starting with the impressive Arena, built in the 1st century and still in use today. Discover the balcony where Juliet stood while Romeo declared his love at the Casa di Giulietta and visit Piazza delle Erbe (Market Square) to see the site of the Forum during the Roman Republic.

Italy is full of beautiful, medieval castles. Staying overnight in one can truly be a magical experience. The Relais Castello Bevilacqua is exactly what you would imagine a castle stay should be. It is located near the walled village of Montagnana in the Po River valley. We will enjoy dinner together at the Castle's wonderful restaurant as we step back in time for an evening. (B) (D) Moderate

#### Day 7 - Eat, Pray and Love, Love This Day! - Wednesday, October 17, 2018

Today we head out early and make our way into the beautiful region of Tuscany. We will take time for a stop at the American Military Cemetery located just outside of Florence. The compelling sight of endless rows of white marble crosses recalls the heroism of the young Americans who fought so valiantly to free Italy from the grips of fascism during World War II. The 1940's may seem very long ago, but during WWII this area was terribly ravaged by the fighting. I feel it is an honor and our duty to take time to pay our respects and offer up a few prayers to these brave soldiers.

Next, we head into the Chianti hills for a stop at one of my favorite villages in Tuscany. Castellina in Chianti is surrounded by stunning views over thick forests, olive groves and perfectly manicured vineyards. The village is small, but it is fun to explore. Do not miss a walk through the Via delle Volte, a covered street that runs under the town. There are some wonderful shops in this small town, especially for Tuscan art and photographs. This was an ancient Etruscan city over 3000 years ago and there are some tombs just outside of town. We will take time to savor some of the best pizza in Italy at the local pizza joint.

Then we off to our overnight destination located in the region of Umbria, known as the Green Heart of Italy. Orvieto sits majestically atop an outcrop of volcanic tufa stone with thousands of caves underneath the city, dug out during Etruscan, Medieval and Renaissance times. Orvieto was once another important Etruscan city. Today it is famous for one of Italy's most beautiful Gothic cathedrals with a miracle behind its construction, and a delicious white wine, Orvieto Classico. It is the perfect place to spend the evening relaxing with a glass of the Orvieto Classico from the terrace of the Hotel Virgilio gazing upon the magnificent Duomo. We will enjoy dinner at the Trattoria Tipica Etrusca which specializes in Etruscan dishes and hides a secret underground chamber. (B) (L) (D) Moderate

Day 8 - A Wonderful Day at the Avignonesi Winery - Thursday, October 18, 2018

You will have some time this morning to enjoy the grand hill town of Orvieto. You must visit inside the Duomo, 300 years in construction, with its San Brizio Chapel covered in frescos by Luca Signorelli.

For our lunch today, we will return to the lovely Tuscan countryside filled with vineyards and tiny hamlets to the Avignonesi Winery for a tour of their ancient ageing cellars. This will be followed by an unforgettable gourmet lunch accompanied by estate wines; and the setting is spectacular! After our wonderful lunch experience, we will head back to Orvieto and you will have more time to enjoy this amazing hill town. Perhaps there will be time for a tour of the fascinating Orvieto Underground to see thousands of years of archaeological history. (B) (L) Light

Day 9 - Ancient Pompeii and the Sorrentine Peninsula - Friday, October 19, 2018

Today we head to Southern Italy for a visit to one of the most beautiful areas in Italy. The Divine Coast south of Naples is truly memorable. Here mountains erupt from the Mediterranean and pastel-hued villages cling to their sides. This area is filled with dazzling antiquities like Pompeii and breathtaking natural wonders. We will spend 3 days in this picturesque region.

When Mount Vesuvius erupted in AD 79, the lively port city of Pompeii was perfectly preserved by the volcano's ashes. Pompeii has amazed visitors since its discovery in the 18th century. Exquisite mosaics and wall paintings among the ruins of theaters, shops, homes and temples offer total immersion into the ancient Roman world. We will visit the site with a local guide and enjoy a tour throughout the excavations.

We will then head to Sorrento, known as the city of orange and lemon groves, which you will see everywhere. The perfume of the citrus trees is a reminder to sample the local liqueur, Limoncello. You will find panoramic sea views from many points in town, including from your balcony at Hotel Il Nido. We will explore Sorrento and its narrow Roman-grid streets, then sit down and enjoy a delicious dinner. (B) (D) Strenuous

Day 10 - La Dolce Vita in Paradise - Saturday, October 20, 2018

You will have time today to enjoy more of this heavenly location just as you like. You can spend more time in Sorrento. You could take a train or bus to other areas along the coast. Take a cooking class. You could hop a ferry to the magical Isle of Capri. Hire a private boat for fun in the Mediterranean. It is your day to spend as you like, enjoying "the good life." (B)

Day 11 - Picturesque Villages & Amazing Views Along the Amalfi Coast - Sunday, October 21, 2018

Today will be a full day of discovery on a drive along the famous Amalfi Coast, the most amazing of all the Mediterranean shores. It has also been designated a UNESCO World Heritage site. You will visit the vertical town of Positano, where colorful houses cling to a hillside overlooking the sea. Continue to Amalfi, once a mighty maritime republic. Enjoy a walk through the town and a visit to the Duomo di Sant' Andrea which glitters when the sun strikes the gold mosaics on its pediment. Back at the hotel we will dine together one last time at our farewell dinner at the hotel's fine restaurant where we can enjoy those amazing views. (B) (D) Moderate

Day 12 - Arrivederci Italia! - Monday, October 22, 2018

It is time to say "arrivederci". You will transfer to the Naples Airport to catch your flight home. Parting will be such sweet sorrow, but I know you will take along wonderful memories of time spent enjoying "Scenic Italy" with new friends. (B)

(Included meals are designated each day with (B) for breakfast, (L) for lunch, and (D) for dinner.)

**\*There will be the opportunity to travel to Rome on Monday, October 22nd for drop off at the Rome Ciampino Airport. That way you can spend a few days in Rome or just plan your air travel departing from Rome. Sometimes it is easier and less expensive to leave or arrive out of Rome.\***

### **THE FOLLOWING IS INCLUDED IN YOUR ITALY WITH FRIENDS TOUR:**

- 11 nights' accommodation in 3-4 star, centrally located hotels with private bath or shower.
- Many meals included: 11 breakfasts (B), 2 lunches (L), 7 dinners (D).
- All ground transportation in Italy during tour.
- Does include pickup from Milan Malpensa airport and transfer to Stresa during specified hours. (If you choose to arrive early or stay a few days, all transfers to and from airport or train stations will be at your own cost.)
- Includes transfer to Naples Airport from Hotel in Sorrento at specified times on departure day.
- Guided sightseeing and entrance fees to select sights, wineries and museums as described in itinerary.
- Local VAT taxes and government fees, gas, highway tolls and parking fees.
- Pre-tour visit with helpful travel information.
- Plenty of memories to last a lifetime.
- Surprises along the way.

### **NOT INCLUDED IN TOUR:**

- Does not include airfare.
- Does not include remaining meals, alcoholic or non-alcoholic drinks at included meals.
- Does not include personal expenses such as internet use, laundry, mini-bar, or extra transportation in tour towns.
- Does not include travel insurance.
- Does not include city tax required in each hotel. Can range from 1 – 6 Euro per person per night.
- If you choose to ride to Rome on October 22<sup>nd</sup>, all expenses once dropped off at Rome airport are your responsibility.

### **ITALY WITH FRIENDS 2018 - LAND ONLY TOUR PRICES:**

Tour begins in Milan and ends in Naples.

Tour is for 12days/11nights.

The total cost per person is **\$3599.00** with double occupancy.

(Includes Euro exchange rate adjustment. Does not include local city hotel tax)

Traveling solo? Sadly, most hotels only have a few single rooms, so many times they provide what they term "double for single use". They do however, charge a premium for the luxury of staying alone. I am faced with this all the time. If you cannot find a partner, I will be glad to match up single travelers if at all possible. Otherwise, the single supplement for this tour is **\$600.00** extra per person.

### **PHYSICAL DEMANDS:**

Prepare for a physically demanding tour. Age is not a concern so long as you are physically fit, a very good walker at an energetic pace, and able to stand for extended periods of time and climb lots of hills and stairs. All of the above could be done in all sorts of weather and temperatures. You are required to load and unload your bags into the van, and to carry your bag to your room. This sometimes could be a short distance from the hotel. Most days our sightseeing will cover anywhere from 2-8 miles of walking, sometimes over uneven surfaces. Plan to get in shape before you head to Italy.