

ITALY WITH FRIENDS TOURS
TASTES AND TREASURES OF THE NORTHWEST
The regions of Lombardy and Piedmonte
April 23 – May 3, 2020

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

Day 0 - Depart USA – Wednesday, April 22, 2020 - 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, April 23, 2020

Welcome to Italy and the region of **Lombardy!** 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 La Palma. We will explore the small town of Stresa and enjoy a fun and tasty welcome dinner. (D) Light

Day 2 - Lago Maggiore and the Lakeside Village of Stresa - Friday, April 24, 2020

You will have the whole day to enjoy this magical setting. We will start our day with a ride on the lake to visit the Borromeo Island, Isola Bella. Here you find the amazing 17th century Palazzo Borromeo. You will have a private tour inside the palazzo to learn all the history of the Borromeo family who still own the palace today. Then you can stroll the grounds of the magnificent Italianate garden, maybe even see the white peacocks strut their stuff. In April the azaleas are in full bloom in the garden and the vivid pinks and reds will take your breath away. We will take some time for lunch together in the tiny village of Isola Bella.

Then you will have the rest of the day to explore on your own. There are several lovely places to visit on the lake including Isola Madre and Isola del Pescatori (Fisherman's Island). The public ferrys run throughout the day. You could also ride a cable car up into the mountains for amazing views of Lake Maggiore and nearby Lago d'Orta. (B) (L) Light

Day 3 - Cruising on Lago Como & Bella Bergamo - Saturday, April 25, 2020

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 we will hop a ferry for a ride on the lake passing pretty lakeside villages, George Clooney's Villa and stunning mountain vistas. Our destination is Bellagio, self-proclaimed "Pearl of the Lake". You will have plenty of time to immerse yourself in this beautiful setting.

Then we head east to Lombardy's Glacial Valley and the town of **Bergamo**. Set in the foothills of the Alps, prosperous Bergamo has an attractive *Citta Alta* (Upper Town) whose Renaissance buildings and medieval lanes are encircled by impressive 17th century Venetian walls. The medieval neighborhoods and elegant avenues of the *Citta Bassa* (Lower Town) are good for shopping and viewing fine art. We will stay in the lower town for the next 3 nights. After time to settle into our hotel we will enjoy dinner together. (B) (D) Moderate

Day 4 – Exploring the *Citta Alta* of Bergamo - Sunday, April 26, 2020

Bergamo and nearby Brescia have a long history of Roman, medieval and even Venetian strongholds. There is however, evidence of much older human occupation up in the surrounding hills where the rocks and caves are peppered with extraordinary prehistoric petroglyphs. We will focus on the

medieval and Renaissance history found in the Upper Town. We will ride a funicolare up to the Citta Alta. Since this region is also known for wonderful food like its hearty pastas and risottos, polenta, salamis and cheeses we will combine our sightseeing with local food tasting during the [Bergamo Food Tour](#). This will be a fun way to learn all about this area and Bergamo. (B) (L) Moderate

Day 5 – Sparkling Wine from the Hills of Franciacorta - Monday, April 27, 2020

Today you will take a little excursion where you will discover the luscious landscapes of [Franciacorta](#) on a wine tour. Your wine tasting adventure begins with a drive along hilly roads and through picturesque countryside while your guide shares engaging insight into the history and peculiarities of the region.

Franciacorta is one of Italy's best-known winemaking regions, and its delicious namesake sparkling wine is fast gaining popularity throughout the world. Unlike Prosecco, which is made in large vats, Franciacorta is produced in a similar way to Champagne, with secondary fermentation taking place in the bottle. Like Champagne, Franciacorta is made using chardonnay or pinot noir grapes, but thanks to the region's warmer climate, the end result is a complex, more refined flavor.

You will visit a small family-run winery nestled in the heart of the sprawling green hills. Accompanied by the winemaker, you will explore the vineyards and cellar rooms as you learn about the method of wine production. Afterwards, enjoy a tasting session of three different Franciacorta wines along with some fresh local products including cheese and salami.

The tour continues on to a nearby traditional farmhouse for a tasty lunch. After lunch, you will head to one of the region's most renowned wineries, steeped with a rich-history and world-wide envied wines. Following a guided tour of the cellar, enjoy another tasting session of superb Franciacorta wines. We will return to Bergamo for the evening. (B) (L) Light

Day 6 - Lago Garda's Sirmione & Piedmonte's Langhe Hills - Tuesday, April 28, 2020

Today 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.

After some time to enjoy Sirmione, we will say farewell to Lombardy and travel to the region of **Piedmonte**. We will pass through the fertile plains of this region where you will see many fields of rice. We will take time to visit some of the famous wine villages in the area known as the [Langhe hills](#). La Morra and Barolo are both picturesque villages serving up some of the most famous wines in the hills. This area is not only famous for its wines but is also known as a the "gourmet corner" of the country with its white truffles, mushrooms and hazelnuts. They are also very proud of their salami, cheese and artisan bread.

We will settle in for the night at the lovely country hotel, [Tota Virginia](#). The magnificent view of Serralunga d'Alba from your balcony will bring tears to your eyes. We will enjoy a dinner of the local cuisine with some of that famous Langhe Hill's wine. (B) (D) Moderate

Day 7 – Piedmonte Villages of La Morra and Barolo - Wednesday, April 29, 2020

We will spend the day exploring two of the UNESCO World Heritage villages in this area. They received this honor thanks to unique winemaking traditions that combine historical methods with modern machinery. The views from both [La Morra](#) and [Barolo](#) are amazing. There will be time for some wine tasting in La Morra at the Cantina Communale. Here you can learn all about the local wines such as Barbera d'Alba and Barolo. Later, we will enjoy dinner together in La Morra. (B) (D) Moderate

Day 8 – Charming Torino - Thursday, April 30, 2020

With the Alps as a glorious backdrop, **Torino** (Turin), today an economic powerhouse is also a town of grace and charm. It has squares, museums, castles, palaces and boulevards fit for a king. Indeed, it was the first capital of the kingdom of Italy in 1861. It is also home to the famous *Shroud of Turin*, the Fiat car company and the birthplace of Italian cinema. We will take time to discover all the most famous sights on a walking tour. Also, did you know that this was where the first chocolate bar was created in the 16th century, so how could we not take time for a "Chocolate Lover's Tour"?

We will settle in to our hotel and enjoy dinner in this city known for its innovative cuisine. (B) (D) Moderate

Day 9 - Milano, Powerhouses of Prosperity and Grace - Friday, May 1, 2020

After exploring Torino to the max, we will make our way to another powerhouse, the wonderful and vibrant city of **Milan**. We will settle into the Hotel Berna located in the heart of the city near the Stazione Centrale. We will hop on the Hop-on-Hop-off bus for a leisurely sightseeing tour of the city. Later we will enjoy an "Appertivo" Walking Tour. (B) Light

Day 10 - Marvelous Milano - Saturday, May 2, 2020

Today will be busy as you enjoy a full day in Milan. You will visit the main sights on a guided tour. The Milan Duomo is one of the most ornate in Italy. You can even walk on top of the roof. The highlight to any visit of Milan is seeing Leonardo da Vinci's masterpiece, *The Last Supper*. Later in the evening, we will enjoy a farewell dinner together. (B) (D) Moderate

Day 11 - Arrivederci Italia! – Sunday, May 3, 2020

It is time to say "arrivederci". Parting will be such sweet sorrow, but I know you will take along wonderful memories of time spent enjoying the Tastes and Treasures of Northwest Italy with old and new friends. (B)

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

THE FOLLOWING IS INCLUDED IN YOUR ITALY WITH FRIENDS TOUR:

- 10 nights' accommodation in 3-4 star, centrally located hotels with private bath or shower.
- Many meals included: 10 breakfasts (B), 3 lunches (L), 6 dinners (D), plus a Chocolate Lover's Tour and Milan Apertivo Tour. Water & coffee provided with all meals. Wine with dinner only unless specified otherwise.
- 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.)
- 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 transportation to the airport in Milan on your departure day.
- 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.

ITALY WITH FRIENDS 2020 - LAND ONLY TOUR PRICES:

Tour begins and ends in Milan.

Tour is for 11days/10nights.

The total cost per person is **\$3699.00** 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 **\$875.00** 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.