

Italian Highlights Tour



Rome, Florence and Venice

Visit and tour some of the most beautiful regions of Italy – Umbria, Tuscany and Veneto.

- Stay three nights in **Rome**, the capital of Italy and the eternal city that has had a uniquely central role in the history of the western world and Christianity.
- Spend three nights based in **Florence**, exploring its wealth of art, culture and history and visiting stunning Tuscan highlights in Pisa, Siena and San Gimignano.
- Spend three nights in **Venice**, “La Serenissima” - the most serene.

Arrive with an open mind and you will find yourself agreeing with Henry James, who wrote on his arrival in Rome that “At last, for the first time, I live.”

Enjoy the land that gave the world pasta and pizza, Dante and Machiavelli, Michelangelo and Da Vinci, Verdi and Pavarotti, Fellini and Sophia Loren, a wonderful sense of style and la Dolce Vita. Discover Roman ruins and Renaissance palaces, admire tiny medieval hill towns, enjoy the special colors of Tuscany and the Veneto and find out for yourself what makes this region so seductive. Or simply come to enjoy the food and the wine.

Map



Itinerary

Day 1 - DEPARTURE

Board your flight from your home destination to Leonardo da Vinci - Fiumicino Airport, Rome, Italy. This itinerary assumes this to be an overnight flight.

Air fare independently arranged.



Day 2 - WELCOME TO ROME

Arrival in Rome, Italy.

You are picked up individually after your flight and brought to your hotel in Rome.

Time to relax in the afternoon, or to go for a stroll or start sightseeing on your own.

Tonight you'll meet your travelling companions and tour director, and enjoy a welcome dinner at one of Rome's fine restaurants. After dinner join your tour director for a leisurely stroll to the Trevi Fountain.

> *Your tour includes: Transfer from Rome airport to hotel, welcome dinner with menu choices and wine (or, of course, something else), overnight in Rome hotel.*

Day 3 - ROME, ST. PETER'S, COLOSSEUM



Sightseeing in ROME today starts with an inside visit to ST. PETER'S SQUARE and BASILICA. Work started on the new basilica 500 years ago and took 150 years to complete, involving the contributions among others of Brabante, Raphael and Michelangelo, whose dome soars 119 metres above the papal altar and the site of St. Peter's tomb.

Afterwards admire the COLOSSEUM – the greatest amphitheatre of the classical antiquity – built about 1,930 years ago. It is considered an architectural and engineering wonder, and remains as a standing proof of both the grandeur and the cruelty of the Roman world.

After the splendour of imperial times, the Colosseum was abandoned, and in turn it became a fortress for the medieval clans of the city, a source of building materials, a picturesque scenery for painters, and a place of Christian worship. Today it is a challenge for archaeologists and a setting for events and shows.

Day 3 - Rome, continued

In the afternoon join your tour director for a leisurely stroll to see the Spanish Steps and free time for shopping followed by dinner in a local trattoria.

Buffet breakfast, door-to-door transportation, entrance and guide fees for St .Peter's and Colosseum, three-course dinner with wine, overnight in Rome hotel

Day 4 - TIVOLI, FRASCATI, CASTEL GANDOLFO

Late morning departure on a country excursion to Tivoli for a visit to the famous VILLA D'ESTE, built by Cardinal Ippolito d'Este. The park has masterpieces of garden architecture such as the *Organ Fountain*, the *Fountain of the Owl and the Birds*, the *Fountain of the Goblet* by Bernini and the *Avenue of the Hundred Fountains* by Pirro Ligorio. All in all, a total of over 500 fountains.



After your visit you have time for lunch and shopping, before we continue to FRASCATI, situated on the Alban Hills. Frascati, known for the splendid villas built from the 16th century by the Popes, Cardinals and Roman nobles as status symbols of Roman aristocracy, has been called the Roman Versailles. Not the least of its attractions is the famous wine, which you have time to enjoy.

From here it is a short ride to CASTEL GANDOLFO, famous for its Papal Palace, the summer residence of the Holy Father. The lovely town is situated on the edge of an extinct volcano, the Alban Lake.

Early Country Dinner on the way back to Rome.

Buffet breakfast, door-to-door transportation, entrance and guide fees for Tivoli, three-course dinner with wine, overnight in Rome hotel

Day 5 - PERUGIA, ASSISI, FLORENCE

Today say goodbye to the eternal city and go north. Our first stop is PERUGIA, the capital of Umbria, for a guided tour of the city. One of the best preserved Italian hill towns, it has a lively and bloody past. It was also home to fresco painters like Pietro Vannicci, know as Perugino, teacher of Raphael.



Day 5 – Perugia, Assisi, Florence, continued

After free time for lunch we go to famous ASSISI, home of St. Francis of Assisi. Despite the millions of tourists and pilgrims it attracts every year, the town has managed to remain a beautiful and tranquil refuge. Visit the Basilica with a Franciscan monk.

Continue to Florence, for your three nights stay. Dinner at the hotel tonight.

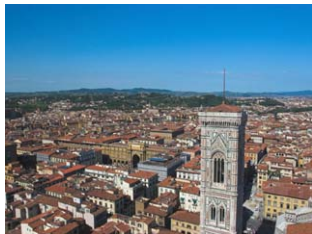
> *Buffet breakfast, door-to-door transportation, entrance fees and guided tours, three-course dinner with choices, one drink and coffee, hotel in Florence*

Day 6 - FLORENCE

Today we focus on FLORENCE, the cradle of the Renaissance, the home of Dante, Machiavelli, Michelangelo and the Medicis – overwhelming in its wealth of art, culture and history, yet one of the most atmospheric and pleasant cities to visit.

Enjoy a guided tour and visit Michelangelo's *David*, stand in awe of Brunelleschi's magnificent *Duomo*, and Giotto's bell tower. Walk the Ponte Vecchio, and visit the Uffizi Gallery, the world's best collection of Renaissance paintings. End your walk in Piazza della Signoria, the hub of the city's political life through the centuries, which has the appearance of an outdoor sculpted gallery.

The afternoon is at leisure to do more sightseeing on your own, or shop for leather, fashion or art. Tonight take your pictures from Piazzale Michelangelo overlooking this magnificent city, and then head for our perfect Tuscan garden dinner.

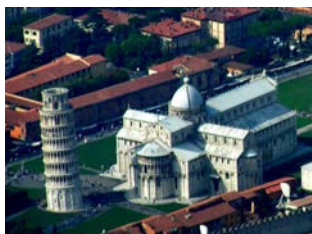


> *Buffet breakfast, door-to-door transportation, guided tour of Florence, all entrance fees, three-course garden dinner with menu choices, wine and coffee, hotel in Florence*

Day 7 - PISA, SIENA, SAN GIMIGNANO

Our first stop today is PISA to take your pictures of the most famous bell tower in the world. The top of the tower is more than 12 feet from where it is supposed to be.

Our next stop is SIENA. Go for a walk with a local guide in this beautiful, gentle city built on three hills and still surrounded by its ramparts. Its medieval centre has streets lined with majestic Gothic buildings in various shades known as burnt sienna.



Day 7 – Pisa, Siena, San Gimignano, continued

Siena was one of the major centres of Europe in the 13th and 14th centuries and flourished as a result of its extensive trade links and pre-eminent banking houses – the country's richest at that time. Today Siena is host to its famous Palio, a medieval festival featuring a bareback horse race around the magnificent Piazza del Campo. Banking is still important and the Monte dei Paschi bank is of international importance and the biggest employer in the region.

On a hilltop in the heart of Tuscany, just a few miles down the road from Siena, stands SAN GIMIGNANO, a majestic medieval walled town, its profile bristling with tall towers that are famous all over the world. When you arrive and walk through the ancient gates, you'll think time had stopped many centuries ago. San Gimignano prospered in the 13th century from its location astride the pilgrims' route from Northern Europe to Rome. It has retained all its old streets, its walls, gates, palaces, strongholds and 14 of the original 72 towers.



Dinner tonight is on your own in Florence.

> *Buffet breakfast, door-to-door transportation, entrance fees and local guide in Siena, hotel in Florence*

Day 8 - BOLOGNA, VERONA, VENICE

Today we go northeast. Our first stop today is BOLOGNA, the capital of Emilia-Romagna and home of the oldest university in Europe. Perfectly situated on one of the main crossroads of Italy, between the Po River and the Apennine mountains, Bologna is one of the most developed cities in Italy. Try some of the famous mortadella, and enjoy strolling around one of the best preserved medieval cities in Europe.

Continue on to VERONA, perfectly located on the Adige River at the southern slopes of the Alps, the setting for Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. See "Julia's" balcony and the well preserved Arena, home of a world famous opera festival each summer. Enjoy free time to stroll in the market square, before we head to Venice for a late afternoon arrival.

Check into your hotel on Lido Island – home of the Venice Film Festival, the Casino and the sandy beaches. Enjoy a first impression of St. Mark's Square in the evening, and a nice dinner by the canal.



> *Buffet breakfast, door-to-door transportation, entrance fees, three-course dinner with choices, one beverage and coffee, hotel in Venice Lido*

Day 9 - VENICE

Today see Venice with a local guide. Arrive by boat at St. Mark's Square and join the tour of this most unusual city. See St. Mark's Basilica, which blends the architectural and decorative styles of East and West to create one of the greatest buildings in Europe. Tour the elegant Doge's Palace, the official residence of Venice's rulers. The 14th century façade of the Palace inspired architects all over the world. Walk across the Bridge of Sighs, and maybe go up the Bell Tower for an incredible view. We see the Grand Canal in style on a gondola ride.



Dinner on your own tonight with lots of suggestions.

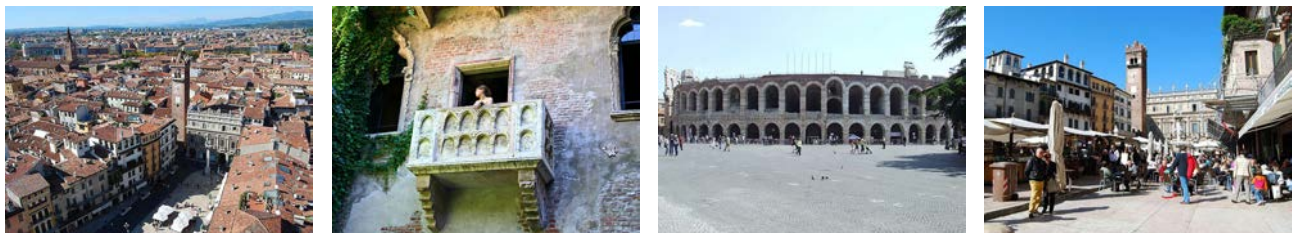
> *Buffet breakfast, door-to-door transportation, entrance fees, hotel in Venice Lido*

Day 10 - VENICE, VENETIAN LAGOON

This morning we cruise the Venetian Lagoon and stop in Murano, the glass blowing island. Murano has been the centre of the Venetian glassmaking industry since 1291, when the furnaces were moved here from the city. Watch the creative process, and perhaps shop for upscale souvenirs. Our next island stops are Burano, the fisherman island, and Torcello island, once the largest and most important settlement in the Venetian Lagoon, now a largely abandoned island with a very old basilica.

This afternoon go back into Venice or enjoy the sandy beaches of the Lido.

Tonight we are having a fantastic farewell dinner.



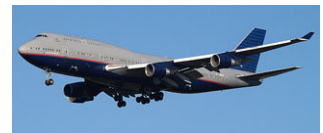
> *Buffet breakfast, door-to-door transportation, entrance fees, three-course dinner with choices, one beverage and coffee, hotel in Venice Lido*

Day 11 - Transfer to Venice Marco Polo Airport

After breakfast we have arranged for individual transfers to reach your homebound flight, which arrives home the same day.

Buon Viaggio!

> *Buffet breakfast, transfer to airport*



Cost and Date Information

- Tours include:
- all features as per itinerary,
 - 9 breakfast buffets,
 - 7 three-course dinners, each including one drink and coffee or tea,
 - 9 nights accommodation ... in first class hotels,
 - door-to-door transportation,
 - reservation fees, entrance fees, and local guide fees, and
 - the services of the Tour Director and Driver throughout the tour.

There are no hidden extras.

The **Italian Highlights Tours** listed below are offered on the following basis:

Tour prices are for the **land segment** only. Air fare is not included.

Prices are per person, in U.S. dollars, based on double occupancy.

Single Occupancy is available for a Single Supplement charge of US \$ 300.

A child 8 to 16 years old sharing a room with two adults receives a 30% reduction on this tour.

Guaranteed Departure: The Italian Highlights Tour is guaranteed to operate as scheduled and will not be cancelled due to a low level of participation.

A deposit of US \$ 300 per person is required to secure a reservation.

Personal expenses, lunches and gratuities for the driver and local guides are not included.

Italian Highlights Tour – 2012

Your overnight flight leaves ...	Double Occupancy	Single Occupancy	Child 8 - 17 with 2 Adults
September 19, 2012	US \$ 2,890	US \$ 3,190	US \$ 2,023

Detailed **Reservation Request** instructions and your choice of an online or paper form are provided on the Reservations page of www.europeancastlestours.com .

Final payment is due 45 days before departure.

Five weeks before departure you will receive a detailed information package with lots of travel tips and information about places we will visit.

Participation in Astrid Baur Travel tours is conditional on acceptance of the Astrid Baur Travel **Terms and Conditions** posted on the Reservations page of www.europeancastlestours.com .

Cost and Date Information, continued

Cancellation Policy

If notice of cancellation is received more than 45 days prior to tour start, the deposit will be retained.

Otherwise:	31 to 45 days prior to tour start:	20 % of total price
	15 to 30 days prior to tour start:	35 % of total price
	8 to 14 days prior to tour start:	50 % of total price
	1 to 7 days prior to tour start:	75 % of total price
	Departure day and later:	100 % of total price

The deposit will be applied to any cancellation charges.

Contact Information

Would you like to talk to passengers from previous tours? Let me know.

I will be pleased to answer questions you may have, and very pleased to take your reservation.

Astrid Baur, Tour Director

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