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Best of Italy

October 15 – 26, 2023



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Small Group Travel rewards travelers with new perspectives. With just 12-24 passengers, these are the personal adventures that today's cultural explorers dream of.

12 Days • 17 Meals: 10 Breakfasts, 2 Lunches, 5 Dinners

HIGHLIGHTS... Venice, Gondola Ride & Boatyard Visit, Classical Music Concert, Po River Delta Wetlands Sailing, Choices on Tour, Republic of San Marino, Impact Moment: Culinary Arts & Agriculture Vocational School Visit, Florence, Chiusi Etruscan Museum, Labyrinth of Porsenna, Rome, *Trastevere* Food Tour Dinner

ITINERARY AT A GLANCE

Day 1	Overnight Flight
Days 2, 3	Maison Venezia UNA Esperienze, Venice
Days 4 – 6	Borgo Conde Wine Resort , Forli
Days 7, 8	Grand Hotel Cavour Florence, Florence
Days 9 – 11	Ponte Sisto Hotel, Rome

On some dates alternate hotels may be used.

Day 1: Sunday, October 15, 2023 Overnight Flight Join us for a fabulous Italian adventure featuring the magic of Venice, Florence and Rome. Journey to the wine-producing Romagna countryside for a 3-night stay in a wine resort, and visit the Republic of San Marino, an enclave state of Italy. Come along with us and embrace the history, culture, art and romance of this incredible country.

Day 2: Monday, October 16, 2023 Venice, Italy - Tour Begins Welcome to enchanting Venice (UNESCO) with its 117 tiny islands surrounded by a latticework of 150 canals and 400 bridges. This evening, meet your fellow travelers over a welcome dinner. (D)

Day 3: Tuesday, October 17, 2023 Venice - Gondola Ride - Classical Music Concert This morning, explore the traditional Venetian craftsmanship behind one of the city's symbols: the sleek, iconic gondola boats. Visit a local *Remèr* oar-making workshop, one of only a handful still active in the city. Then, join a local guide for a walking tour of the Venice's most iconic sights. Pause for the perfect view over the Bridge of Sighs and take in St. Mark's Square, adorned with marbled palaces and gilded basilicas. Travel by boat to Murano for an expert glass-blowing demonstration, a renowned tradition on the island. This evening, glide along the canals during a gondola ride* before delving into Venice's classical music heritage while attending a live performance of the *Four Seasons*** composed by the great Venetian Antonio Vivaldi. (B)

Day 4: Wednesday, October 18, 2023 Venice - Po River Sailing - Romagna Countryside Say "Ciao" to Venice as you journey towards the Romagna region, famous for its epicurean lifestyle and its *joie de vivre*. Along the way, visit the Po Delta (UNESCO). Since ancient times, this delta has been the border between the Venice and the Ravenna regions, once two independent states. These wetlands will give you a glimpse into what Venice and Ravenna looked like to ancient Roman settlers making their way here from the south. You'll explore these wetlands by pontoon boat,* learning about how the ecosystem here actually aided the Romans in escaping the barbarians that harried them. You'll also learn about the lives of fisherman and farmers whose lives have changed very little over the last 1000 years.

Take in the tranquil scenery before stopping for lunch at a local restaurant. In the afternoon, continue to your hotel nestled among vineyards in the Romagna countryside and settle in for your 3-night stay. (B, L, D)

Day 5: Thursday, October 19, 2023 Romagna Countryside - Choice on Tour Today, it's your choice! Bask in the bucolic landscape at your wine resort hotel and pamper yourself with an organic wine-infused mud treatment in the onsite spa -OR- spend the day exploring Ravenna (UNESCO). During the darkness that enveloped the last days of the Roman Empire, Ravenna emerged as a center of power thanks to its strategic position. The city's rulers – the Byzantines, the Goths – adorned its churches with dazzling mosaics. During a guided walking tour, discover the city's most illustrious monuments including the mosaics that inspired Cole Porter's Night and Day. This evening, join the local chef for a hands-on cooking class centered on Romagna's most typical pasta dishes with colorful names such as *garganelli* or *strozzapreti* (priest-stranglers), and enjoy the results of your work for dinner. (B, D)

Day 6: Friday, October 20, 2023 Romagna Countryside - San Marino - Romagna Countryside Grab your passport*** and journey to the landlocked Republic of San Marino, the fifth-smallest country in the world. Perched at the top of Mount Titano, the old town of San Marino (UNESCO) gives visitors sweeping views over the Adriatic Riviera and the gentle rolling hills of the Romagna countryside. Explore the Old Town's intricate system of fortification towers, walls, gates and bastions during time at leisure. This evening, wrap up your stay in the Romagna Countryside with a wine-pairing dinner at your wine resort hotel. (B, D)

Day 7: Saturday, October 21, 2023 Romagna Countryside - Emilia Food Valley - Florence Today, travel to the Emilia region, Italy's foodie haven. Meet students and teachers at a vocational high school**** for an **Impact Moment** dedicated to the Culinary Arts and Agriculture. Here, Italy's future chefs and farmers learn how to make *Parmigiano-Reggiano* cheese according to traditional codes, dating back to the 1300s. Students also try their hand aging Balsamic vinegar, a generational process taking anything from 12 to 25 years. Enjoy a farm-to-table light lunch prepared by the culinary students using ingredients from the School's farm. Later, continue to Florence (UNESCO), the "Cradle of the Renaissance" and your home for the next 2 nights. (B, L)

Day 8: Sunday, October 22, 2023 Florence This morning, meet a local expert for a walking tour of a city that is a work of art all on its own. Your guide will highlight the Piazza del Duomo, the Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore and the Baptistery. You'll also visit the Piazza della Signoria with its impressive Palazzo Vecchio. The remainder of the day is yours to explore Florence's cultural riches independently. Perhaps you'll visit to one of the city's many museums,***** such as the Uffizi or Academy Gallery, where Michelangelo's *David* is kept. (B)

Day 9: Monday, October 23, 2023 Florence - Chiusi - Rome This morning traverse southern Tuscany, the ancient land of the Etruscans. This mysterious civilization predated the Romans, who assimilated them, erasing most of their way of life, even though many early kings of Rome were Etruscans. By all accounts, they were an advanced society and culture. On a guided walking tour of Chiusi, once part of the Etruscan Dodecapolis, you explore the town's underground water system – which has so many twists and turns that it was nicknamed *Labyrinth of King Porsenna*. You'll also visit the small archeological museum housing some of the most interesting artifacts archeologists found in the surrounding hills. Arrive in Rome (UNESCO) in the afternoon and settle in for a 3-night stay. (B)



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Day 10: Tuesday, October 24, 2023 Rome This morning, it's your choice! Explore Rome your way: delve into Rome's second Golden Age on a walking tour exploring its Renaissance and Baroque heritage and featuring Caravaggio's paintings, alongside the Pantheon and Navona Square **-OR-** explore Rome's Christian heritage on a panoramic tour featuring the Catacombs and the medieval basilica of St. Sabina on the Aventine Hill. The afternoon is yours to explore more of Italy's capital city. Perhaps you'll join an optional tour for an in depth visit of the Colosseum and the Capitol Hill with its monumental piazza designed by Michelangelo. (B)

Day 11: Wednesday, October 25, 2023 Rome Make the most of a free day in the Eternal City. Perhaps you'll stroll through the Borghese Gardens for views of the city's skyline or join an early morning "Breakfast with Michelangelo" option***** to the Vatican Museums. Your visit begins with a buffet breakfast in the Pinecone Courtyard with views of Michelangelo's cupola – the dome sheltering St. Peter's Basilica. Then, 1 hour ahead of the Vatican Museums' opening to the general public, enjoy the ability to roam freely through one of the world's greatest Art collections. With the aid of an audio guide, you'll be able to independently explore the Museums' highlights, including Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel. Gather tonight to toast the end of your Italian adventure during a food tour* in Rome's bohemian *Trastevere* district. (B, D)

Day 12: Thursday, October 26, 2023 Rome - Tour Ends Your tour comes to a close today, leaving you with many fond memories of incredible Italy. (B)

PLEASE NOTE:

Book Now rates valid until Mar 16, 2023, valid on air inclusive packages only. IDENTIFICATION

Passports are required for this tour at your expense. Certain countries require a minimum of 6 months passport validity from date of return home. You are strongly urged to contact the appropriate consulate for details. Visit www.travel.state.gov for the U.S. State Department for the latest details about passports and visa requirements.

IMPORTANT: We recommend that our clients traveling abroad take a photocopy of their passport and applicable visas. It should be packed separately from your actual passport and visa. We also recommend leaving a copy at home with your emergency contact.

Effective for travel after November 2023, all visitors who do not need a visa to enter Europe will be expected to apply for an ETIAS travel authorization, for a fee, when visiting a Schengen Area Country. To identify Schengen Area Countries and to complete the ETIAS application, please visit <https://www.etiasvisa.com/>

To complete your tour, we include roundtrip airport-to-hotel transfers when purchasing our airfare with your tour. If you have arranged for your own air, we are pleased to provide you the option of *purchasing* these transfers. Please note that all transfers will leave at pre-scheduled times.

When reserving single accommodations, be advised that single rooms in Italy are often smaller in size.

Single accommodations are limited and are available on a first come, first served basis.

Days of features are interchangeable.

For more information visit <https://gateway.gocollette.com/link/1152644>

*On occasion, due to inclement weather: your gondola boat ride in Venice may be substituted with a motorboat transfer; your pontoon boat ride on the Po Delta may be replaced with an enclosed motorboat ride or for a tour of the local River Museum; and your farewell dinner in Rome may be served in a local restaurant instead.

**Exact concert program is confirmed 6 months ahead of your tour departure date and is subject to change. Occasionally the orchestra may be on tour and unavailable.

***Bring your passport to San Marino if you would like to have it stamped with the country's entry visa.

****During school holidays the visit to the culinary vocational school will be replaced by a visit to a local farm producing Parmigiano-Reggiano, and lunch will take place at a local Balsamic vinegar producer.

*****Most museums in Florence are closed on Mondays, including the Academy Gallery and the Uffizi, as are other state museums. Most state museums in Florence require reservations to access. In order to avoid standing in long lines, we suggest you reserve your ticket online prior to departure if you plan to visit the Academy Gallery or the Uffizi during your free time in Florence.

The *Breakfast with Michelangelo* option must be purchased no later than 60 days prior to tour departure date. Once purchased any cancellation within 60 days of tour departure will be nonrefundable. Due to the very limited number of tickets available, this option is not available for purchase on tour.

Most shops and businesses in Italy are closed on Sundays and on national/religious holidays.

*****The Colosseum and Vatican Museum optional tours must be purchased at a minimum of 60 days prior to departure. The Vatican Museums and Colosseum dates and times are all subject to change based on availability of reservations. Vatican Museums are not available on Sundays and Catholic holidays.

The overall activity level of this tour is a level 3. This means you're an on-the-go traveler. You don't want to miss a thing, so walking and standing for longer periods of time (1-2 hours) isn't a big deal. You can navigate hills and uneven ground, climb into various modes of transportation (tuk-tuk, cable car, Zodiac, etc.), and could possibly anticipate changes in elevation. You can expect some longer days balanced with free-time to recharge or set out on your own adventure. In Italy, some of the most unique sightseeing can mean accessing locations that restrict motor coaches, especially in the historic areas of Venice, Ravenna, San Marino, Florence and Rome. For your comfort, we recommend bringing walking shoes. Agility is required for boarding the gondola boats in Venice and the pontoon boat in the Po Delta. The visits to the underground Labyrinth of Porsenna in Chiusi and to the Catacombs in Rome require negotiating 3 to 4 flights of steps and may not be suitable for people suffering from claustrophobia. If you require a walker or wheelchair, or have difficulty walking, you may not be able to access some of these areas and may want to consider an alternate program with us. Our Client Care team can provide additional information or assistance to help you determine the perfect trip for you.

Please be advised many airlines do not provide advance seat assignments until check-in at the airport. Advance seating will be subject to the airline's terms and conditions.

Economy air rate and schedule are applicable for groups of 10 or more traveling on the same flights and dates.

A deposit of \$698 per person is due upon reservation. Reservations are made on a first come, first served basis. Reservations made after the deposit due date of March 09, 2023 are based upon availability. Final payment due by August 16, 2023. Deposits are refundable up until March 16, 2023.

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**For important reservation information visit
<https://gateway.gocollette.com/link/1152644>.
You can also find this information on your tour documents.**