

Roman antiquities, pious Assisi, Venetian canals, Renaissance Florence and Capri sunshine are fused with a touch of 'la dolce vita' for the perfect tour of Italy.



Ascend the slopes of Monte Subasio to visit the walled city of Assisi and its massive Basilica of St Francis

Best of Italy

TOUR PACE

This tour has a well balanced pace with two-night stays in three of the five centres – Rome, Florence and Sorrento – and overnight stays in Assisi and Venice. The driving days are of a comfortable length with several stops en route for refreshments and photo opportunities.

HOTELS

Hotels include the modern La Griffe, situated on one of Rome's most famous shopping streets, and the Sheraton selected for its access to the airport on Day 11. Traditional styles prevail in the other centres. Stay in the medieval heart of Assisi at the Giotto and by the Grand Canal in Venice. La Favorita is a new hotel in the heart of Sorrento's historical quarter, offering sweeping views from the vast terrace.



Visit the Vatican City in Rome

DAY 1 – DEPART USA. Board your overnight flight.

DAY 2 – ROME AT LEISURE. Welcome to Rome, a glorious city filled with Classical antiquities, medieval buildings, Renaissance palaces and baroque churches. On arrival at Rome's Fiumicino Leonardo da Vinci Airport, your *airport shuttle service* leaves for the tour hotel at 09:30, 12:30 & 15:30. Tonight meet your Tour Director for a *Welcome Drink*. Hotel: La Griffe/Cicerone

DAY 3 – ROME SIGHTSEEING. *Enjoy an in-depth sightseeing tour with a local guide who will take you inside the Vatican Museums to gaze upon the treasures of the Popes. Enjoy clear commentary via your audio headset as you admire Michelangelo's famous ceiling inside the Sistine Chapel.* Now enter *St Peter's Basilica* to wonder at another of his works, *the emotive 'Pieta'*. Then *cross the Tiber to visit the Colosseum, scene of many gladiatorial contests. After seeing the Roman Forum*, the rest of the day is yours to sightsee or shop. (BB)

DAY 4 – ROME – ASSISI. Leave Rome and follow the valley of the River Tiber to the hills of Umbria, which form part of the Apennines. Your destination is the peaceful hill-top town of Assisi, the home of St Francis. *Visit the Basilica of St Mary of the Angels*, then continue up *Mount Subasio* to the town. Step inside the huge *Basilica*, built in the 13C after St. Francis' death, where the frescoes by *Giotto* heralded a new era in Italian art. Hotel: Giotto/Roseo (BB,D)

DAY 5 – ASSISI – VENICE. A pleasant drive leads to the romantic city of Venice, and what better way to see it than from a *private launch*? Cruise past Palladian churches and 13C palaces to *St Mark's Square*. See the *Doges' Palace*, connected to the prisons by the *Bridge of Sighs*. It was from here that Casanova made his daring escape. Now *admire the mosaics of the Basilica* and watch one of the few remaining masters blow molten glass into a unique creation at a *Venetian glass-blowing factory. Relax and enjoy the atmosphere as you cruise along the Venetian canals by gondola.* Hotel: Continental/Principe/Amadeus (BB,D)

DAY 6 – VENICE – FLORENCE. Back on the mainland, drive along the scenic *Brenta Canal* with its magnificent *Palladian villas*, once the summer residences of Venetian nobility. Cross the plain of the Po River and traverse the Apennines to reach the Arno valley. Then follow the river to the coastal town of *Pisa* to see the famous *Leaning Tower*. Time also to admire the *marble cathedral and Baptistery* before continuing to *Renaissance Florence* for a two-night stay. Hotel: NH Firenze (BB,D)

DAY 7 – FLORENCE SIGHTSEEING. Join a *local guide for a walking tour of the historic city centre. A highlight is the visit to the Academy Gallery to see Michelangelo's monumental figure of David.* Continue to the *multi-colored marble Cathedral* to see *Giotto's bell tower* and '*Gates of Paradise*' before visiting the *Piazza della Signoria*, still the political heart of Florence. The area around *Santa Croce Basilica* is famous for the quality of its luxury goods; see a *demonstration of leather work* in the very place this craft first established itself. Then, there's free time to shop for Florence's finest or continue sightseeing. (BB)

DAY 8 – FLORENCE – SORRENTO. *Hear an informative tutorial about the famous Chianti wines that make this region so famous* as you take the smooth

motorway south. Continue through the rich volcanic hills of Frascati to *Cassino* where you visit the *Commonwealth Cemetery*, overlooked by the austere monastery of Montecassino. Now follow the scenic cliff top road towards the picturesque resort of Sorrento. Hotel: La Favorita/Grand Hotel La Pace (BB)

DAY 9 – ISLE OF CAPRI EXCURSION. Investigate the art of '*intarsio*' or marquetry wood inlaying before *cruising to the sun-drenched island of dreams, Capri – a rock rising from the Mediterranean. Take the funicular train up to Capri Town*, where you can explore the narrow alleyways, browse in the exclusive boutiques and enjoy the views over the Mediterranean Sea. Perhaps join an optional tour to Anacapri to visit Villa San Michele before returning to your hotel for some relaxation time. *Why not immerse yourself in the Italian culture and work up an appetite on a traditional evening stroll (passeggiata) – it's a time to 'see and be seen'.* Later you are offered a selection of local restaurants for your dining pleasure. (BB,DA)

DAY 10 – SORRENTO – POMPEII – ROME. Only a short drive from the hotel lies *Pompeii, the opulent Roman town which was preserved by layers of ash from the disastrous eruption of Mount Vesuvius in AD79. A walking tour with a local guide through the cobbled streets and extensive excavations reveals the daily life of ancient Roman civilization.* Afterwards, the smooth motorway leads back to the 'Eternal City' of Rome. *Tonight, join your fellow passengers for a last night celebration Highlight Dinner of local cuisine, complete with wine and entertainment.* Hotel: Sheraton (BB,HD)

DAY 11 – RETURN TO USA. Arrivederci Roma! Sadly, your tour comes to an end after breakfast. *Departure transfers* arrive at Rome's Fiumicino Leonardo da Vinci Airport at 07:00 & 09:30. (BB)



Relax in Florence