



SAMPLE ITINERARY  
for  
FOOD AND WINE LOVERS

Monday, September 19      Arrive Milan

You will arrive at Milan Malpensa at 7:10 p.m. In order to get to your accommodations, meet your driver in the arrivals area for transfer to your accommodations in a Mercedes E Class.

Tuesday September 20      Milan

Go light on breakfast today so you have room for all you'll be able to taste on this tour.

Milan For Foodies

Eating your way through Milan is a great way to experience Italy's financial and fashion capital. On this 3-hour small group food tour, you will not only taste some delicious local and Italian delicacies, but you will also discover one of the oldest and most fascinating neighborhoods in Milan: the **Brera District**. After meeting your guide, you will be taken to one of the best pastry shops in town where you'll taste a heavenly Italian cream roll and learn how to make it at home. Next stop is a delicatessen where you will taste two different cold cuts, *Culatello di Zibello* and Parma ham, and learn how these aged hams are made. Your tour will continue by visiting Milan's most ancient shop where you will taste *mondeghili* (typical Milanese meatballs) and *Parmigiana*, the classic dish of pan-fried eggplants, tomato sauce and cheese. Since Milan is known for its *aperitivo* culture, your next stop will be a bar where you will get one of the most classic local drinks, the *bicicletta* (bicycle). In the last stop you will sample different flavors of freshly made gelato and discover all the secrets of how it is produced.



Time to get walking to work off some of those fabulous treats you just enjoyed....



Explore the city center on foot. Head first to the **Duomo** located at Piazza del Duomo, a traffic-free square in the middle of Milan. Work on this monumental church first started in 1387 and continued over five centuries. A rare example of Gothic architecture in Italy, the Cathedral features stained glass windows and statuary. The outside of the structure features elaborate flying buttresses which support the roof and vaults of the building. There are an estimated 3,200 statues decorating the vaults, spires and buttresses. The main entrance to the cathedral is adorned with very large bronze doors with carvings depicting events important to the history of Milan. However, the best part of a trip here is to enjoy the **roof of the cathedral**. After paying a small entrance fee, you can go to the northeast corner of the Duomo and take an elevator ride to the roof.

Here, you get an all around view of the city of Milan, and the Square in front of the Cathedral. It's a nice way to get your perspective here and the views are tremendous—you can even see the Alps on a clear day.

Next to the Cathedral is the Palazzo Reale, now an art gallery showing work from the medieval period to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Originally the city hall in medieval times the Palazzo was home over the centuries to the Torrani, Visconti, and Sforzas. It was reconstructed in Neoclassical style but badly bombed in the Second World War - only the original hall remains. In antithesis to the dominance of the cathedral, Italy's commercial prosperity is celebrated in the nearby Galleria. Elaborate decorations look down upon this marble paved concourse, beneath massive iron and glass vaulted roofs. The Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II was designed by Guiseppe Mengoni between 1865 and 1877. With its upmarket shops, cafes and restaurants this is one of Milan's most fashionable places to be seen.

Right across the Duomo is the **Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II**, a 19th century shopping arcade that can very well have been the model for modern shopping malls. It was built in 1867 and named after the King of Italy at the time. Here you can go shopping under the glass ceiling, or just sit at a café to watch people go by. Interesting features of the Galleria include the floor and ceiling decorations. The floor is decorated with the symbols of the great cities of Italy — the bull of Turin, the wolf suckling the twin founders of Rome, the lily of Florence and the red cross of Milan. There is a Milanese tradition of making a wish as you spin around with your heel on the testicles of the bull. The entrance to the Galleria from the Piazza Duomo is crowned by a triumphal arch, which was added in 1877.

From here you can walk down the covered street, which meets with another covered path at a cross-intersection under a glass dome. If you proceed straight ahead, you will come to the North entrance, which leads you to the Piazza della Scala. Famed throughout the world as the stage for the first performance of many famous operas, **La Scala** is one of Milan's most enduring landmarks. While you are here, you can visit the **La Scala Museum**, which is of course dedicated to the history of the theater and to music. Exhibits include costumes from famous performances held at the theatre and worn by Maria Callas and Rudolf Nureyev, sketches of stage scenery and sets, and a collection of antique musical instruments.

Later, stroll through the southwest part of the city where Naviglio Canals Quarter is located. This was once considered to be the major area for communications and commerce. This area is also considered to be one of the liveliest in Milan and has not changed much over the years with its small apartments and courtyards and tiny stone balconies. The area is also known for its nightlife, with its many nightclubs, pizzerias and pubs, not to mention the churches which are among the oldest. It's a great blend of old and new.

Experience the Golden Triangle for the best shopping in Milan and maybe all of Italy. This is the name given to Milan's famous shopping streets, Via Monte Napoleone, Via della Spiga and those that run between them, Via San't Andrea, Via Gesù, Via Borgospesso. Home to the country's famous designer shops, you should come here to window shop even if buying is not for you. There are also some wonderful shop interiors and window displays to be seen.

### Wednesday, September 21 **Milan**

#### **The Wine Roads of Franciacorta from Milan** (7 hours, private)

Just a short hour's drive from Milan lies the bountiful zone of Franciacorta, a wine region that is becoming increasingly renowned as a gem of Italian Champagne Method wines. Located at the foothills of the Alps, the terroir is perfect for the growth of Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. This full-day private wine experience allows you to fully discover the beauty of the region, its people, cuisine, and story by visiting two of the most prestigious wineries of the area.

Departing from your hotel in Milan, you will first visit an estate headed by a family whose agricultural roots trace back to the thirteenth century. Your visit will begin with a tour of the welcoming grounds at the Museum of Agriculture and Wine, which displays objects and tools

traditionally used in the production of wine and agricultural goods, before heading to the cellar to explore the magic that is Franciacorta wines. Your visit to the farm will culminate with a lunch of various traditional *antipasti*, or appetizers followed by a seasonal risotto and a homemade dessert. This lunch will be paired with three of the family's Franciacorta wines.

From this very traditional farm, you will head to a modern estate whose contemporary style offers a contrast to the agrarian estate visited earlier. You will tour the cellar, learning the history of the estate and exploring its highly technological advancements in wine production. You will then visit the barrique cellars, the historic repositories of art, and lastly, the dome. Here you will enjoy a tasting of the winery's Franciacorta Cuvve Prestige, Curtefranca Bianco, and Curtefranca Rosso.



### **Thursday, September 22 — Como**

Take a day trip to Lake Como on your own today. You've decided to take the train for the short ride to Como and then take the ferry to Bellagio.

Bellagio is an elegant and long-established tourist resort, which still retains considerable charm. From the central waterfront, stepped and cobbled lanes rise up the hill in a tight little network separating the lakeshore from the town's main street, Via Garibaldi. This is a pretty lane where you'll find more shops, cafes and also Bellagio's main town square, Piazza San Giacomo, or Piazza della Chiesa. The square is dominated by the town church, the Romanesque Basilica di San Giacomo. Externally you can admire the attractive bell-tower and elegant apse. On the opposite side of the square is a medieval tower, once part of Bellagio's now-disappeared defenses and now a tourist office where you can buy tickets and meet for the tours of Villa Serbelloni's gardens (highly recommended).

Walking from the piazza past the church and out towards the tip of the Bellagio promontory, you reach a viewpoint, park and little harbor at Punta Spartivento, where the lake divides. Heading in the other direction from the square, Via Garibaldi passes the main entrance to Villa Serbelloni and reaches the town hall. At this point, a paved footpath (signposted) leaves the road and heads towards Pescallo, about ten minutes' walk away. Pescallo is an enchanting little fishing hamlet looking out over the western Lecco branch of Lake Como, on the opposite side of the promontory to the main settlement of Bellagio. There's a restaurant with tables right on the water's edge, and although there are one or two hotels, the atmosphere here is low-key, charming and miles away from the more touristed world of Bellagio.

You might also enjoy a visit to Villa Carlotta in Tremezzo. Villa Carlotta is a place of rare beauty, where masterpieces of nature and art live together in perfect harmony in over 70,000 square meters of gardens and museum. The beautiful villa was built at the end of XVII century by the Milanese marquis Giorgio Clerici in a natural basin between lake and mountains, facing the dolomite Grignas and the peninsula of Bellagio. The gardens of Villa Carlotta chiefly owe their reputation to the rhododendrons' and azaleas' spring flowering, consisting of over 150 different sorts. But the gardens are worth to visit any time of the year: old varieties of camellias, century old cedars and sequoias, huge planes and tropical plants, the rock garden and the fern's valley, the rhododendron's wood and the bamboo garden, the agricultural tools museum and the wonderful views on the lake built in the ages the celebrity of this place, still today consider "a place of heaven".



Head back to Milan for your last evening here.

**Friday, September 23                      Milan to Bologna**

Take the 10:00 a.m. train from Milan to Bologna, where you will arrive at 1:22 p.m.

Bologna is a handsome, red-brick city, packed with palazzi. One of Bologna's defining features for the last thousand years has been its university, the oldest in Europe. Many of the buildings and museums, which dominate the town's historic center, are legacies of this heritage. There was a shortage of rooms for university's many students; Bologna's solution was to build porticoes over its streets, extending the houses above to create more accommodations. These sweeping porticoes are a striking feature of the town's distinctive architecture. Today Bologna is still noticeably a student town, lively and entertaining. The town is also renowned for its left-wing politics and freedom from the Italian blight of political corruption.

Bologna tourist attractions are centered around the town's main square, Piazza Maggiore, and the adjacent Piazza Nettuno (complete with fountain of Neptune). The large cathedral is the Basilica di San Petronio, which has impressive reliefs on the doors, and interior fifteenth-century frescoes of heaven and hell. Like so many Italian cities, medieval Bologna was the scene of inter-clan rivalry, and two of the towers resulting from the competition between the town's families are now famous tourist sights. The Due Torri of Bologna are two leaning structures, built in 1119. The shorter, Torre Garisenda, was immortalized in Dante's *Inferno*. The taller tower is the Torre degli Asinelli, which is over 300 feet tall, and which is open to the public. It leans about 3 feet, and if that does not bother you, the views are worth the climb. Bologna's principal art gallery is the Pinacoteca Nazionale, containing works by local artists and others, including Guido Reni, Raphael, Giotto, Titian and Perugino.



Bologna began life as an Etruscan town, and relics of the town's early phase of development can be seen in the town's archeology museum, the Museo Civico Archeologico.

Late this afternoon, enjoy this fun cooking experience—no need to go out for dinner because you'll enjoy the fruits of your labor at the end of class.

**Pasta Making Class**

Your destination is located in a picturesque courtyard in the heart of Bologna where, since the 1960's, a bakery once stood. Barbara and Valeria, two gourmets coming from different cooking realities, but with a common passion for teaching, founded their cooking school in February 2012. Today, they welcome individuals and groups interested in learning the techniques of the Italian cuisine and, in particular, the culture and flavors of traditional Bolognese and Northern Italian cooking.

If you choose the morning class, meet the chef and your fellow participants at the characteristic *Mercato Quadrilatero* of Bologna, where you will learn all about the products to be used in that day's menu. Following the market tour, you move to the school's professional kitchen to begin the hands-on cooking class. It focuses on how to prepare pasta dough, how to roll it out in sheets using a traditional *mattarello* rolling pin and about how to create basic fillings and sauces using fresh, seasonal ingredients. Three different types of pasta will be made: *tagliatelle*, stuffed *tortelloni* and potato *gnocchi*, along with three savory sauces. Lunch will follow with the food you have personally prepared, accompanied by the wine from of the hills of Bologna.



Balsamic D.O.P, fresh ricotta with balsamic jelly, ice cream with 6 years old Balsamic Condiment + Ham factory tour, fresh sliced prosciutto tasting with Lambrusco wine + Lunch with WINE, taxes and insurance.

### Sunday, September 25      Bologna to Florence

Take the 11:25 a.m. train from Bologna to Florence this morning, where you will arrive at 11:59 a.m.

Ready for lunch? The place to go is the *Mercato Centrale*, which is housed inside a large two-story building designed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. If you don't want to sit down for a long lunch, there are some great options here. On the ground floor, vendors sell meats, fish and a variety of cheeses. This is also a great place to pick up foodstuff gifts. 2014 brought the inauguration of the first floor (second floor U.S.) above the food market: imagine a fancy food court, combining tasting stands, shops and a cooking school. 3000 square meters with 500 seats (including a bank & Fiorentina shop—soccer team) and 12 different food stands open seven days a week for a hungry public.

Mercato Centrale Firenze not only revives an area of the city left deserted for many years, but fulfils an extremely relevant and necessary goal: to bring people back to a highly important and vibrant piece of Florence's old center, with traditional shops that give food artisans center stage. Bread and confectionary, fresh fish, fried food, fruit and vegetables, meats and salamis, buffalo mozzarella, cheeses, chocolate and ice cream, fresh pasta, wines, lampredotto and sandwiches: all shops are run by artisanal traders who share a passion for their craft. Yum.

After lunch, visit the Oltrarno area – literally “the other side of the Arno River” – is considered by many to be the most beautiful and characteristic area of Florence. This quarter has many artisan workshops, which maintain age-old traditions, such as working with gold, silver, and wrought iron or creating paper, hats or shoes. Stroll through the quaint streets and enjoy the heritage and history of Florence as it thrives in this charming neighborhood. The Oltrarno is also home to a trio of treasured churches—Santa Felicitá, with not just one, but two of Jacopo Pontormo's masterpieces; Santo Spirito, designed by Brunelleschi; and Santa Maria del Carmine, where the Brancacci Chapel is located. There are many terrific restaurants in the area, so we suggest returning here for dinner.



If you're looking for great vistas, take a moderately challenging walk to Piazzale Michelangelo, where you can view Florence from afar. It will give you a gorgeous overview of the city. While you are there, visit the beautiful Basilica di San Miniato al Monte (St. Minias on the Mountain), which stands atop one of the highest points in Florence, and has been described as the finest Romanesque structure in Tuscany and one of the most beautiful churches in Italy. St. Minias was Florence's first martyr. He was beheaded during the anti-Christian persecutions of the Emperor Decius and was then said to have picked up his head, crossed the Arno and walked up the hill of Mons Fiorentinus to his



hermitage. A shrine was later erected at this spot and there was a chapel here by the 8th century. Construction of the present church was begun in 1013 as Benedictine monastery; the Olivetans run it now. The monks make famous liquors, honey and tisanes (herbal teas), which they sell from a shop next to the church.

Head back to the center of the city. You might enjoy a visit to the Duomo (a.k.a. Santa Maria dei Fiori); this, the adjacent

baptistry, and bell tower are considered the religious center of the city. Seeing Brunelleschi's signature dome from the inside of the church is really something; but if you want to see things up close, you can climb up into the dome itself or up into the bell tower. If you are up for the climb, the tiny figures viewed from below take on a really different perspective from here.

Stroll through the glorious Piazza Signoria and view the imposing Palazzo Vecchio on the square. (You can visit inside as well.) Enjoy the legendary Ponte Vecchio – the oldest surviving bridge crossing the famous Arno River. It is filled with goldsmiths from end to end. Note the Vasari Corridor above the bridge; the Medicis used this to move from their offices (the Uffizi) to their home, the Pitti Palace across the river.

### Monday, September 26      Florence

#### A Day in Liguria (8 hours)

Explore the breathtaking views of the Ligurian Coast at a relaxing pace. This tour is a romantic combination of oceanic and mountainous landscape. Begin your tour with a visit to **Santa Margherita**, and discover its historical center and the beautiful baroque Santa Margherita d'Antiochia church. Continue with a lesson in Ligurian gastronomic delights with a special '**focaccia**' bread tasting, spiced deliciously with onions, olives, or herbs. Next, stop in **Portofino** and take in Italy's most exclusive resort harbor. The last stop entails a short ferry ride to the **Abbey of San Fruttuoso** that was built in the 11th century and sits beautifully surrounded by olive and pine trees. Time permitting, walk around the quaint fisherman's village of Camogli and take part in every day Ligurian life.

### Tuesday, September 27      Florence

Play it by ear today, but you are considering renting a car to visit Siena. You can also take a train if you prefer.

You have a 7:30 p.m. dinner reservation at La Giostra.

### Wednesday, September 28      Florence

Enjoy time on your own today. We suggest an easy excursion up to Fiesole. Fiesole is a pretty town in the scenic hills of Tuscany above Florence with Etruscan roots, Roman ruins, and views of Florence on clear days. In summer, there are breezes to cool the temperature and outdoor performances in the Roman Amphitheater. Its prime location on a hill five miles north of Florence and it makes easy to get to. To reach Fiesole with public transportation, take bus #7 from the train station straight to Fiesole's main square.

Highlights of Fiesole include:

- **Piazza Mino** - Fiesole's large main square was named after the sculptor *Mino da Fiesole*. It's ringed with cafes, restaurants, and shops. On one side is the pretty 14th century *Palazzo Pretorio*, the town hall, with coats-of-arms displayed on its facade.
- **Cathedral** - *Cattedrale di San Romolo* dates from the 11th century but has been modified several times. It has its original 13th century bell tower that can be seen from a long distance. Inside the cathedral are works by *Mino da Fiesole* and frescoes. The nearby *Museo Bandini*, Via Dupre 1, houses sacred works from the 14th and 15th centuries.
- **Archaeological Area or Zona Archeologica** - Fiesole's Archaeology park includes a partially restored 1st century BC Roman amphitheater, baths, and an Etruscan temple. There are Roman, Longobard, and Etruscan ruins and a museum with prehistoric, Etruscan, Roman, and Medieval artifacts. The entrance is on Via dei Partigiani, open at 9:30 and closed Tuesdays except in summer.



- **Etruscan Walls** - The Etruscans settled in Fiesole about 2000 BC, building the city of *Faesulae*, the most important city of the region before Roman times. They left their typical huge Etruscan walls, which can be seen several places, the best being below the archaeological park on *Via delle Mure Etrusche*. There are remains of two Etruscan tombs outside the Etruscan walls.
- **Convento di San Francesco** - The uphill walk is worth it for views of Fiesole, the hills, and sometimes even Florence. Take *Via di San Francesco*, the steep pedestrian-only street west of the Duomo. There's a Gothic church with Renaissance paintings and 14th century wooden choir stalls, built on the site of the ancient acropolis. On exhibit in the museum are local archaeological finds and a display relating to the friars' missionary work in China and Egypt. Currently it's free (donations appreciated) and open daily. Below the convent is a large park.
- **San Domenico di Fiesole** can be reached by walking down the road (or taking the bus) toward Florence. *Fra Angelico* first entered the monastic world here and the 15th century church holds his *Madonna with Angels and Saints* and the chapterhouse also has *Fra Angelico* frescoes. Nearby is the *Badia Fiesolana*, Fiesole's ancient cathedral built in 1028, with its original Romanesque facade.
- **Monte Ceceri** - The quarries at Monte Ceceri outside Fiesole produce the famous Tuscan gray stone. There's also a nature park and a pillar with an inscription about Leonardo da Vinci's flight experiments.

Fiesole is a great place for walking although much of it is hilly. Starting behind Palazzo Pretorio is a marked Panoramic Walk along *Via Belvedere* that leads to panoramic views of the hills and town. The tourist office map recommends three walks of varying difficulty. We took a 1.3 km route taking in Etruscan walls, the terrace with views of Florence, and Convento di San Francesco. There's a walk downhill to San Domenico monastery with views along the way and a longer walk (2.5 km) that takes in the stonemasons' quarries and the location of Leonardo da Vinci's flight.

**Cooking Lesson with Chef Barbara** (3 hours, 5:30 p.m. start time, small group, so others could be joining in)



Barbara is a native Florentine, and has been fascinated by food since she was a small child. Her father is a noted musician and opera singer, and she had the opportunity to travel widely throughout the world with him, observing and absorbing different culinary styles. Following her acquiring a degree in political science, Barbara began her journey into the world of cooking. She has worked at the famed "Cibreo" restaurant in Florence, and was a teacher at the Scuola di Arte Culinaria Cordon Blue for three years. In 2002 she became a sommelier, and in 2003 she began giving cooking lessons.

Now you can join Barbara, who speaks perfect English, for a daily class beginning at 10:00 a.m., when you visit the wonderful Sant'Ambrogio market. Then on to her "atelier" where she has created a cozy, welcoming atmosphere and teaching kitchen with all modern equipment for the hands-on cooking lesson, followed, of course, by your wonderful lunch with wine. If you only have time for a one day class in the Florence area, this is a great experience!

If you prefer to have a "country" experience after the market visit, you have the option of returning with Barbara to her lovely country home, Le Mortinete, a wonderful house built in the 16th century located at the beginning of the Chianti area. It is a rare opportunity to be just a few minutes from the center of Florence but in the heart of the Tuscan countryside! The house has a very well-equipped kitchen where you will have your hands-on lesson, and a garden circled by olive trees and roses, where, weather permitting, you will enjoy your lunch. If you choose the country experience, Barbara will take you from the market to her home by car (her

car holds up to 4 people besides herself), and she will call you a taxi to take you back to Florence after the class (a taxi ride is about €45).

#### **Thursday, September 29      Florence to Rome**

Take the 11:24 a.m. train from Florence to Rome, where you will arrive at 12:55 p.m.

Once you get settled in your hotel, do some independent exploration today; we'd suggest northern Rome for this. Head to Piazza Barberini. The Via Veneto epitomizes the glamorous Rome of "La Dolce Vita" – you can imagine Sophia Loren riding in a convertible with a scarf wrapped glamorously around her neck! Walk north to the church of Santa Maria della Concezione and see the Capuchin Crypt. (Closed between 12 and 3. If it's closed, be sure to stop here later, but you may want to read up on it and determine if it's acceptable for your younger children.) Although Via Sistina will also take you to your next destination, it does not have the "House of Monsters" that you'll find at Via Gregoriana 28. Baroque painters Frederico and Taddeo Zuccari had their house near the top of the Spanish Steps fitted out with gaping, monstrous mouths for doors and windows.

You'll then come upon the Spanish Steps. This is Rome's living room, a meeting point for many Romans (and tourists). Built with a gift from the French in 1725, but named after the Spanish Embassy to the Holy See (which is still located in the piazza), the steps lead to the French church, Trinità dei Monti. The piazza just to the right is Piazza Mignanelli, home to Valentino's atelier—see the V above the door? The new Valentino flagship store just opened here as well.



Stroll toward Via Margutta. Over the years, an impressive array of artists -- Fellini, Picasso, Stravinsky, Puccini -- have lived, found inspiration and created masterpieces on this tiny street. (Gregory Peck's character in "Roman Holiday" lived on this street.) Our favorite shops are Saddler's Union (at #11) featuring leather goods, and La Bottega del Marmoraro (#53B), a tiny shop overflowing with small marble plaques. For €15 or so, the owner, Signor Fiorentini, will chisel any words you want into a piece of marble. There are also a couple of restaurants here that we like: Babette and Margutta Ristor Arte.



Walk up Via Babuino to the Piazza del Popolo, one of the main entrances used by pilgrims to enter the city for centuries. Visit the church of Santa Maria del Popolo to view some of the works of Caravaggio (not to mention Rafael and Bernini) and take in the view from the Pincio Hill. You can stroll through the Villa Borghese, Rome's equivalent of Central Park if you need to escape the hustle and bustle. Explore the Tridente area, which includes the Ara Pacis, with its new building designed by Richard Meier; Via Condotti; home to many of Rome's high-end retailers, cafes, and scenic streets.

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Dinner at Dilla, located at Via Mario de' Fiori 41, is confirmed for 8:00 p.m.

## Friday, September 30 \_\_\_\_\_ Rome

Enjoy some time in ancient Rome this morning on one of these small group tours.

### Small Group Premium Colosseum Tour with Roman Forum & Palatine Hill (3 hours, start time 8:30 a.m., maximum 15 participants)

With privileged entrance you'll skip long lines to gain immediate access to the Colosseum, where you'll start our journey into Ancient Rome, led by our passionate and entertaining tour guides.

Follow your guide around the circumference of the Colosseum and to the first and second tier as they tell you the stories that bring ancient ruins to life. You'll marvel at the ingenuity of Ancient Roman engineers, frown at tales of public executions and blood-thirsty crowds and discover the secret history of this ancient amphitheater.

So much of what you see and hear of the Colosseum in films and books is untrue – distinguish fact from fiction with the help of your expert guide. They'll teach you the real hand symbols used by emperors to condemn gladiators to death, shock you with the secret, behind-the-scenes shenanigans of gladiators and fascinate you with the other lesser-known uses of the Colosseum.



Your Colosseum tour will teach about more than just gladiators. You'll learn about everyday life in Ancient Rome too, a lesson which extends to the next stop on our journey – the Roman Forum. Here you'll encounter the stores of moneylenders; the final resting place of Julius Caesar; the incredible Arch of Constantine; and the Temple of the Vestal Virgins, whose namesake were charged with keeping the sacred flame alive, plus the grave responsibility of bestowing clemency on men condemned to death.

We'll also visit the Palatine Hill, the birthplace of Ancient Rome and the location of some of its oldest and most impressive ruins. Learn the legend of twins Remus & Romulus, found and raised by a she wolf, one of whom went on to start the Roman Empire. They may seem like old and distant stories, but with the help of your guide you'll gain a real understanding of how the Roman Empire has impacted the world you know today – and even your own day-to-day life! **Cost is €56/person.**

Have some lunch after your time in Ancient Rome. You are confirmed at Maccheroni at 1:00 p.m.



After lunch, visit the historic center on your own. Piazza Navona is a must see for those coming to Rome for the first time, yet those who are returning to Rome also enjoy revisiting this magnificent setting. The square itself is built on the former Stadium of Domitian, built by Emperor Domitian in 86 AD. This explains the long, oval shape of the square. The stadium, which had a larger arena than the Colosseum, was mainly used for festivals and sporting events. It is here that you will find Bernini's Fountain of the Four Rivers—the fountain features four figures, each representing a river from a different continent - the Nile, Ganges, Danube and Rio de la Plata. The statues are at the base of a rock supporting an obelisk, originally located at the Circus of Maxentius, near the Appian Way.

If you're a little hungry while you're here, perhaps you can stop at the famed Tre Scalini for a 'tartufo', a terrific ice cream concoction created with flair.

At the end of the piazza, you'll see a battered Greek-style statue, named Pasquino, one of several "talking statues". Rome's talking statues are a tradition, born in the 1500s as Roman citizens became frustrated with over-taxation and papal politics. They would hang their caustic criticism, stinging epigrams and short satiric verses on the statue. A person could be punished for exercising his or her opinion publicly; it was more difficult to punish a statue! Pasquino not only represents an ancient tradition but is still opining today.

Near Piazza Navona you will also find the lovely church of Gesù, the mother church of the Jesuits. Originally very austere, Il Gesù's interior was opulently decorated starting in the 17th century. Now its frescoes, sculptures and shrines make it one of the foremost examples of Roman Baroque art. In the church of Sant'Ignazio, also close by, *trompe l'oeil* columns soar above the nave, and architraves by Andrea Pozzo open to a cloudy heaven. Trickery was also involved in creating the dome: the monks next door claimed that a real dome would rob them of light, so Pozzo simply painted a dome on the inside of the roof. The illusion is fairly convincing if you stand on the disc set in the floor of the nave. Walk away, however, and it dissolves. Nearby, the church of San Luigi dei Francesi's Contarelli Chapel is adorned with three stunningly dramatic works by Caravaggio, the baroque master of the heightened approach to light and dark. Sant'Ivo Alla Sapienza by Borromini is an absolute masterpiece with its unique architecture.

Or just stroll around, shop, and eat gelato.

Salumeria Roscioli confirmed for dinner at 9:30.

### **Saturday, October 1 Rome**

Visit the heart of the Catholic world today with a private or small group guide. We strongly advise a guided tour to avoid the ghastly lines that appear here daily--these spaces were never designed to be a museum, and yet the Vatican Museums and Sistine Chapel one of the most-highly trafficked museums in the world!

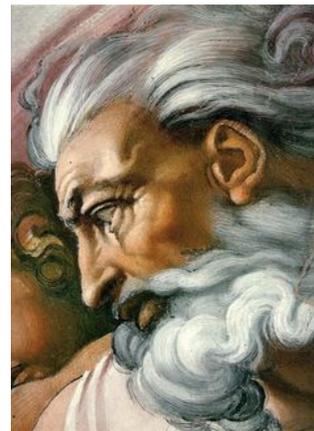
#### **Small Group Pristine Sistine** (3.75 hours, 7:30 a.m. start time, maximum 12 participants.)

This tour gives you the chance to visit the Sistine Chapel before the general public enters to experience the Sistine at its shining best. During the summer months in particular, the crowds can be terrible during general access hours, but not when you visit. You'll power through the empty corridors of the Vatican Museums and be among the first visitors to arrive at the Chapel, for a much more peaceful (pristine!) experience.

Our guides have been carefully chosen as the perfect travel companions, enriching your visit with witty anecdotes and entertaining details to bring world-famous works to life. Entering before the public you'll have time to get up close to the art, admiring it from every angle, without having to use your elbows. But that's only the start of our journey.

We say engage because that's what you'll do. Your guide will lead you on a carefully-crafted route through the best of the collection, teaching you not just about the art and history of the collection (which spans from Ancient Greece to a very modern "Squashed Tomato") but the history of the Papal Palaces too and the many characters that have lived, worked, ruled and painted here.

Traveling in small groups of only 12 people or fewer (with personal headsets in case it's a little loud) you'll always be able



to hear your guide and engage with their stories, asking all the questions you can think of. We won't finish at the Vatican Museums though. Our next stop is the world's largest ancient basilica.

We'll go directly from the Vatican Museums to St. Peter's Basilica, bypassing long general access lines and saving a 30-minute walk. Everything about this incredible building is awe-inspiring. From Bernini's monumental carved Baldachin altarpiece to Michelangelo's emotional 'Pietà' and the huge dome whose completion (literally) threatened to tear the basilica in half.

As you explore this huge building, you'll get an insight into the heart of the Catholic Church and Renaissance Italy with our passionate guides at the helm. Our Pristine Sistine Chapel Tour guarantees that perfect Sistine moment – plus an engaging and entertaining three hours to follow.

Take a cab over to the Trastevere area for lunch. You have a reservation at Roma Sparita at 12:30 p.m.

Then enjoy the mid-day as you wish.

#### **Pasta Making Class: Cook, Dine, and Drink Wine with a Local Chef**

The most memorable, fun, and hands-on way to spend an evening, our Rome pasta-making class gives you a chance to enjoy a true, Roman experience. Your evening will start as all great Italian evenings do, with prosecco, aperitivo and conversation. You'll be greeted by the chef and have some time to chat with your fellow cooks on the terrace before you start.



Once you've relaxed, it's time to learn how to make pasta – from scratch! If you want to make authentic Italian food at home, this is the number-one skill to learn. You'll do it all yourself during our Rome cooking class, from mixing the ingredients to kneading the dough, rolling it and shaping it. No previous experience is necessary since your chef will guide you through the hands-on process – fun for both children and adults. Then sit back and relax over a glass of wine as he demonstrates how to make the perfect Roman ragù, a traditional Pasta all'Amatriciana.

Throughout the evening your chef will teach you tricks for cooking the perfect pasta; from the different uses for different flours, to the best sauce bases and substitute ingredients you can source at home. Of course you'll be eating as you go. You'll sample different Roman cheeses, enjoy a glass of prosecco before you start to cook and local wines during and after (be warned – he'll keep pouring for as long as you're drinking, Italians are dangerously hospitable), nibble on some of his own specialties prepared before class then enjoy dessert and a digestif, just as the Romans do.

The highlight of your evening will be the dish you've cooked for yourself – a Roman specialty guaranteed to be the most satisfying meal of your stay in Italy. Enjoy your meal out on the terrace under the Roman sky.

The wine helps of course, and the teamwork that goes into mixing, rolling, shaping and cooking your pasta – but key to this intimate experience is our small groups. With only 14 people or fewer, you'll get to know everyone and have plenty of time to chat with the chef. In the relaxed environment of his rooftop studio, you'll feel comfortable and perfectly at home – especially when it comes to enjoying the fruit of your labor out on the terrace!

Throughout the experience we encourage you to ask as many questions as you like. This is your chance to learn about how to cook and eat like an Italian from a true expert – take full advantage of it.

For an evening you'll never forget; cook, dine and drink wine with our friendly Roman chef.

### Sunday, October 2 Rome

Enjoy today doing as you wish; here are a few suggestions.

Perhaps you would enjoy a visit to some catacombs. You don't have to go all the way to the Appian Way to do this. We think it's best to visit our favorite: the Catacombs of St. Pricilla on Via Salaria. (They are the only ones that are easily accessible by cab.) For the past five years, archeologists have been excavating and restoring the paintings inside the catacombs and the basilica where Pope Silvestro is buried. Its walls and ceilings are profusely decorated with scenes from the Old and New Testament, including the oldest known Marian image, a stucco of Mary nursing the child Jesus. It just reopened in November 2014. Here is a link to the St. Priscilla Catacombs. Please note that the catacombs are closed between 12:00 p.m. and 2:30 p.m. <http://www.catacombepriscilla.com/inglese/>



San Clemente is another underground highlight. Visitors to the Basilica di San Clemente al Laterano can see not only the present-day church, but also an older church and even older excavations underneath. Evidence suggests that the oldest building on this site likely dates from at least the 1st century B.C.E. It was the home of a wealthy Roman that was probably destroyed during a fire in 64 C.E., but even that structure is thought to have been built on the foundation of an even older building.

Other lower levels of the church have been excavated to reveal a room used in the 2nd century for worship of the cult of Mithras, as well as a 4th century basilica. The church you see at street level today was begun in the late 11th century and features an ornately decorated interior. A visit to the Basilica di San Clemente al Laterano is a fascinating step back in time.

**Foro Boario (Forum Boarium)** Tucked into the southern side of the Capitoline Hill, this sliver of a neighborhood is tranquil, pretty, and rich with ruins. It got its start as ancient Rome's cattle market; today, it exemplifies how Rome is as much a puzzle as it is a city, with contemporary buildings literally fitted into historic ones. Columns from an ancient temple form the ribs of the medieval Church of San Nicola in Carcere (visit the church's underground to see more remains, including an ancient Roman road), while the Romanesque Church of San Giorgio in Velabro is built into the intricately carved, third-century Arch of the Moneychangers.

Attractions aside, the quarter gives a glimpse of how well-heeled Romans live (it's one of the most desired areas in central Rome), not to mention a lovely view of the Forum from the south. Stop at the café Cristalli dello Zuccherero for some of the best *cappuccini* and French-style pastries in the city. Of course, if you are a fan of "Roman Holiday", stop at the Bocca della Verità (Mouth of Truth) is essential.



**Aventino (Aventine)** Just over the Circus Maximus from the Forum Boarium is the Aventine Hill. According to legend, this is where Romulus's brother, Remus, would have set up the city, if he'd had it his way. (Romulus killed him instead.) Like the Forum Boarium, the Aventine is a

residential quarter for those with money and connections. In the spring, the Aventine's bloom-laden trees and gardens make it one of the loveliest places for a stroll.

Head to Parco Savello, informally known as Giardino degli Aranci (Garden of Oranges), for one of the most romantic views over the Tiber River and Saint Peter's Basilica. Don't miss the fifth-century Church of Santa Sabina next door, one of the only churches in Rome not to have been completely "restored" in later years — which means it still retains its 1,600-year-old, elaborately carved wooden door, among other features. Meanwhile, one of the Aventine's quirkiest attractions, fast becoming the Aventine's most ill-kept secret, is just down the street: the keyhole in the headquarters of the Order of the Knights of Malta. A peek through shows the perfectly framed dome of Saint Peter's Basilica, giving you three sovereign states — the Order of the Knights of Malta, Italy, and Vatican City — in one glance.

**Testaccio** In ancient times, this *rione* just to the south of Rome's fourth-century Aurelian walls was the site of Rome's port. That explains the hill, Monte Testaccio, which was formed by all of the broken amphorae that were dumped here after having fulfilled their use of transporting olive oil. In the 19th century, Testaccio was the site of Rome's slaughterhouse. Despite its working-class roots, Testaccio today is a favorite area for young Romans to live — few of whom can afford the Aventine or Forum Boarium, never mind the area around the Spanish Steps. The quarter still has a sizable community of old-timers, too, many of whom you can see going for surprisingly sprightly *passeggiate*, or evening strolls, in the Piazza di Santa Maria Liberatrice each evening. The generational mix gives a real feel for what Rome is really like.

What Testaccio lacks in cobblestoned streets, meanwhile, it makes up for in slightly offbeat attractions. Pay homage to Keats, Shelley, and other non-Catholic notables at the secluded and hopelessly romantic Protestant Cemetery; at the MACRO, admire whatever contemporary art



exhibit is on now in the slaughterhouse that gave the quarter its livelihood (look up to see meat hooks above you). Testaccio is also trying to make an attraction out of its new food market, which opened in 2012 in a clean, modern, but characterless building. While that effort seems to be a struggle — the market has none of the ambience of the previous one, with its wooden roofs and hustling *nonnas* — the quarter still has good food. Favorites include coffee and *cornetto* at Café Barberini, one of the only places in Rome that makes the Italian croissants fresh (rather than reheating frozen versions), and Da Bucatino, where the *amatriciana* is so saucy, they serve you a bib with your pasta.

### Monday, October 3 Depart Rome

In order to get back to the airport for your United #971 at 12:40 p.m. flight today, you will meet your private driver in the lobby of the Hotel Lunetta. You will be driven to the airport in a Mercedes E Class.

~ ARRIVEDERCI ITALIA! ~