

THE GRAND TOUR OF ITALY

7 May - 23 May 2018

27 Aug - 12 Sept 2018

(17 days/16 nights) AUD \$7,980



VITA ITALIAN TOURS

Vita Italian Tours are designed
for the traveller who wants
more than just a holiday

Spring and Autumn are wonderful times of the year to visit Italy. Your experience begins in Rome with a comprehensive guided visit of this remarkable capital city of the world. Then, we travel south to Sorrento with its beautiful views of the Bay of Naples. There will be a half day guided visit to Pompeii. Our stay in Sorrento is not complete without exploring the spectacular Amalfi Coast with stops in Positano and Amalfi.

The tour then heads north east to the city of Pesaro in Le Marche Region. During our stay in Pesaro, we will visit beautiful Renaissance hill towns like Urbino, San Leo, Gradara and the tiny Republic of San Marino. Here amongst castles, bell towers and historical town squares you will discover many ancient crafts, stopping to browse and watch local artisans at work. Most importantly, the tour allows you to experience the excellent hospitality and taste delicious typical dishes and genuine local products.

Then it is off to Venice to experience the sights of this truly unique city. Our last stop will be Florence, which includes tours to Siena and San Gimignano. One of the highlights will be a day in the Chianti area with wine tasting, cellar tour and a special degustation lunch at a famous historical winery in Greve. Two full days will be spent in Florence where you will marvel at the works of Giotto, Michelangelo and Botticelli. You will also have plenty of time to wander through the famous markets of Florence.

A Vita Italian Tour is a personally guided tour, which allows you to relax and enjoy your holiday in Italy. Mario, Viny and Gianni your expert tour leaders, will escort you throughout your stay and they will ensure you have a wonderful experience.

Detailed Itinerary

Day 1 Rome (D) Your tour leaders will meet you at the hotel in the centre of Rome at 4.00pm, where there will be introductions and a small talk on the tour. We will then guide you on a leisurely afternoon stroll through some of the famous *piazze* of Rome. The guided walking tour will include Piazza della Repubblica, Fontana di Trevi, Piazza della Rotonda, Piazza Navona and finally Campo de' Fiori. The walk will end with an early dinner in a traditional restaurant in Campo de' Fiori.

Day 2 Rome/Vatican (BD) Today we spend the whole day at the Vatican. A tour of St Peter's Basilica is followed by a special conducted tour of the Vatican Museums including the Sistine Chapel. There will be time allowed for those who wish to further explore the magnificence of the Basilica and its treasures. The afternoon is free to pursue your own interests. Dinner will be in a traditional Roman restaurant in Trastevere.

Day 3 Rome (BD) After breakfast we continue to enjoy and experience more of the fascinating sites of Rome. We start with a visit to the most iconic building from ancient Rome, the Colosseum followed by a walking tour through the Roman Forum, the centre of all ancient Roman life. The group then proceeds to the Monument to Vittorio Emanuele, Campidoglio and the Mayoral Offices. The afternoon is free to pursue your own interests. At night we say good-bye to Rome with a dinner in a traditional Roman restaurant.

Day 4 Rome/Pompeii/Sorrento (BD) After breakfast we leave Rome and drive south along the Autostrada del Sol making our way to Pompeii which was destroyed and preserved by the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79AD. A local guide will lead the group through the ruins of this truly magnificent city. We then proceed to the hotel in Sorrento which will provide you with some of the most memorable sights of the Bay of Naples and the imposing Mt Vesuvius. Dinner in a traditional restaurant in the heart of Sorrento.

Day 5 Sorrento/Positano/Amalfi Coast (BD) Today will be spent taking in the sights of the Amalfi Coast with its breathtaking views. We first travel by local ferry to enjoy views of the coastline by sea finishing with a stop in Amalfi, once a powerful maritime republic famous for ship building and manufacturing paper. We then continue by land on a local bus to beautiful Positano where there will be some free time to leisurely explore this panoramic and charming town along the Amalfi Coast. We then proceed back to Sorrento by local bus. Dinner in Sorrento.

Day 6 Sorrento (B) Today is a free day for you to relax and enjoy the facilities of the hotel and its beautiful pool or to wander into the historical part of Sorrento. Sorrento has great shops with gifts, souvenirs, ceramics and fine liqueurs. You could also visit Capri and the Blue Grotto or the islands of Procida, Ischia or the nearby city of Naples, only a short trip away by ferry.

Day 7 Sorrento/Pesaro (BD) After breakfast we travel east crossing the Central Apennines to the City of Pesaro in Le Marche Region. We will travel in air conditioned comfort, along the A14 Autostrada, through some of the most beautiful scenery of Central Italy on to Pesaro where we should arrive by late afternoon. The city of Pesaro is a charming town situated on the Adriatic Coast, nestled against a backdrop of hills surrounded by ancient hill towns and castles. After check-in, there is an optional walk through the *Centro Storico* of Pesaro. Dinner at the hotel.

Day 8 Pesaro/San Marino/San Leo (BL) Today after breakfast at the hotel, we travel just over the Le Marche border to the tiny Republic of San Marino. San Marino claims to be the oldest state and constitutional republic in the world and is also worth a visit for its history, pageantry and its magnificent hilltop setting, which offers excellent views of the surrounding countryside. After a walking tour of the historical centre there will be some free time to explore the small streets of this enchanting city state as San Marino is jammed with heavily discounted duty free shops. We then travel to San Leo with its ancient fortress perched on sheer cliffs. We will have a rest in the beautiful town square where we will have lunch and taste the delicious *formaggio di fossa*: a cheese walled up in rock caves to mature for months. Free evening.

Day 9 Pesaro/Gradara (BLD) Today there will be a guided walking tour of the City of Pesaro including the Rossini House and Theatre, the Civic Museums and Piazza del Popolo with its historical Ducal Palace. Lunch will be at one of the oldest restaurants in Pesaro. The afternoon is free for you to relax along the beach or further explore this beautiful seaside city. Towards the evening there is a visit to Gradara: a medieval village dominated by its magnificent castle overlooking the Adriatic Sea. We will tour the impressive castle and the well preserved old town. Gradara was made famous by the legendary love affair between Paolo Malatesta and Francesca da Rimini as immortalised in the 5th Canto of Dante's *inferno*. Dinner at Gradara for *piadina* and local wine.

Day 10 Pesaro/Urbino (BL) Today after breakfast we explore the land once ruled by the medieval lords of Montefeltro. We visit Urbino, one of Italy's fascinating towns of the Renaissance. It is also the birthplace of Raphael. There will be a conducted tour of the magnificent Ducal Palace which houses the Galleria Nazionale delle Marche with its precious paintings by Piero della Francesca, Tiziano, Paolo Uccello and of course Raphael. Lunch will be at a local *osteria* specialising in local produce. Free evening in Pesaro.

Day 11 Pesaro/Venice/Dolo (BD) After breakfast, we say good bye to Pesaro and Le Marche and travel to Dolo (Venice). After check in at our beautiful villa on one the canals that leads to the lagoon of Venice, we travel to Venice for our first visit. We take a *vaporetto* ride along the Grand Canal to Piazza San Marco. We will explore and enjoy some of the best sights of the City including the Basilica, the Bridge of Sighs, Ducal Palace and the Rialto Bridge. We then walk back to our bus through the small streets of Venice. Dinner in the restaurant of the Villa which serves traditional Venetian cuisine.

Day 12 Venice/Murano (BD) Our second day in Venice starts with a ride along the Grand Canal to the island of Murano, where Venice's world famous glass is made. We visit a master glassblower at work and see amazing works displayed in a world renowned glass factory. Then we return to San Marco Square and the afternoon is free for you to shop or to further explore this magical city on water. Dinner at the Villa.

Day 13 Venice/Florence (BD) After breakfast we make our way to Florence, the Renaissance jewel and city of the Medici. We should reach Florence by early afternoon and after check-in we will take a leisurely walk featuring the San Lorenzo Markets and Piazza del Duomo. The Piazza is famous for its beautiful Cathedral with the Giotto Campanile and magnificent East Door of the Baptistery known as the 'Gates of Paradise'. The walking tour will then continue for a visit to the nearby Academy Gallery which houses one of the great masterpieces of the world, Michelangelo's David. Dinner in a traditional restaurant.

Day 14 Florence (BD) Our second day in Florence starts with a visit to Piazza della Signoria and the Palazzo Vecchio where there will be a comprehensive guided visit of the famous Uffizi Gallery. In the afternoon you are free to wander through the famous markets shopping for leather and gold goods, explore other historical sites such as Ponte Vecchio, or you may wish to visit the church of Santa Croce renowned for its frescoes and the tombs of some of Italy's famous artists. Dinner at a local restaurant.

Day 15 Florence/San Gimignano/Siena (BD) We travel south from Florence through some of the most picturesque areas of the Tuscan countryside to visit the medieval hill town of San Gimignano. Housed within its historical 13th Century walls this beautiful town is renowned for its famous medieval towers, artisan boutiques and exquisite local white wine. We then continue on to one of the jewels of Tuscany, Siena. In Siena there will be a walking tour of the historical centre to admire the Piazza del Campo, one of the most beautiful squares in Europe and learn about the famous horse race '*Il Palio*'. There will also be some free time to taste some of the local delicacies and visit some of the many specialty boutiques. Dinner in Florence in a local restaurant.

Day 16 Florence/Chianti Region/Greve (BLD) Today we take a picturesque drive through the Chianti region, quintessential Tuscany. You will experience the atmosphere of this part of Italy which is full of small villages and hundreds of vineyards and olive groves dotting the countryside. We will stop for morning tea in the beautiful town square of Greve in Chianti followed by a special wine tour and lunch at one of the oldest wineries in the area. Final dinner in Florence at a local *pizzeria*.

Day 17 Florence (B) The tour officially ends after breakfast at the hotel.

Items included in the Tour

- All land travel in air conditioned mini buses
- Accommodation for 16 nights in 3/4 star hotels in Rome/Sorrento/Pesaro/Florence and villa stay in Venice
- *Vaporetto* pass in Venice
- **16** breakfasts
- **13** dinners
- **4** lunches (Meals include special lunches and dinners in traditional local restaurants and *osterie* as detailed in the itinerary)
- **Regional** wines and mineral water served with meals
- **Admission** to all galleries, museums, wineries and historical sites included in the itinerary
- **Personally** guided tours to all towns mentioned in the tour
- **Services** of the tour leaders throughout the tour

Items not included

- **Airfares**
- **Travel insurance** (it is compulsory for every traveller to have taken out a travel insurance policy in order to partake on a Vita Italian Tours). If you require, we can assist in organising a policy for you.
- **Admission fees** to places other than those specifically itemised in the itinerary
- **Meals** on tour except when specifically mentioned in the itinerary
- **Drinks** outside normal meal times or additional wine and other drinks in restaurants
- **Personal transport costs**, phone calls and other personal needs
- **Accommodation Tax**

Cost

The cost of the tour, land content only, is **AUD \$7,980** per person in twin share accommodation. **A deposit** of **AUD \$500** is required to reserve a place on the tour which is not refundable unless the tour is cancelled. **Single** supplements are available at an additional cost of **AUD \$790**. The full balance is due 90 days before departure. **The tour** is costed on a minimum of 6 people travelling on the tour with a maximum number of 14 people.

We recommend that you carefully read the conditions applying to Vita Italian Tours

Additional information

The weather: it is the end of spring. It can get warm during the day however the evenings are cool. For the August departure the weather is similar: generally warm days with mild nights. We recommend light, comfortable clothing, a light jacket with your favourite walking shoes. The countryside is undulating and hilly. Many of the hill towns have their historical centres closed to traffic and therefore lots of walking is required. You should expect to stroll leisurely for up to an hour or so with many breaks for sightseeing, coffee and a taste of the local produce. **The program** appears to be full; however it is mixed with long restful lunches and leisure time for your enjoyment and comfort.

If you need to, you can always take time off from the organised program.

For further information

Visit the web site www.vitaitaliantours.com

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