

# ITALIAN JOURNEYS

4400 Cold Springs Road, Winston-Salem, NC 27106

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## Italy Top to Bottom: A 16 Day Family Vacation

### Day 1

Arrive Venice. You have some options for getting into the city. A water taxi will cost around euro 90. Less expensive and less thrilling is the Alilaguna public boat and the least expensive is a bus to Piazzale Roma and then the public vaporetto.

### Hotel Dinesen American

1 superior double room with canal view and 1 standard twin bedded room

Today you are free to explore Venice on your own. It is a small city. You cannot really get lost. Just remember that your hotel is near the Accademia bridge, on the Dorsoduro side. I like to start a tour in Venice by going to the top of the Campanile (bell tower) in Piazza San Marco. The Basilica itself can be very dark and crowded. Make sure, in your rambling, that you get off the beaten track of San Marco. And if you want to do a gondola ride, I like the gondoliers who hang out by the bridge near your hotel. And go at dusk.

For a festive lunch on the water, try the nearby Linea D'ombra on the Zattere. The hotel can help you book this. Excellent fish and gorgeous views of the lagoon. Less expensive and less picturesque but very popular with Venetians and tourists is Alla Madonna. See my list. Again, this is primarily a fish restaurant. If you want something very simple, try one of the student cafes in the Campo Santa Margherita, not far from your hotel. Or if you just want snacks, try the Bar da Gino, across the bridge from your hotel and on the corner. It's where all the Wake Forest students hang out. The staff is lovely and they have, perhaps, the best prices for coffee and buns in all of Venice. Sit outside if it's nice.

### Day 2

Morning orientation tour with Sandie.

Sandie will meet you at your hotel at 9:00 for a morning's orientation to Venice. At the end of your tour, she will leave you at a good restaurant.

Afternoon free to explore Venice or perhaps take a vaporetto (public boat) out to the islands. Sandie can help you figure out how to do this. You might also visit the Peggy Guggenheim Museum which is near your hotel and next door to the Wake Forest house. Dinner on Sunday night can be tricky. Ai Gondolieri, near the hotel, will be open. They serve meat, rather than fish. And it was one of our favorite restaurants, even if it is quite expensive. The Cantinone Storico outside your hotel is also quite nice. There are also lots of little restaurants off Campo San Barnaba, if you want to take pot luck.

### Day 3

Train to Bologna. Take a taxi to your hotel.

### Hotel Orologio

Via November IV, #10

Standard double rooms

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You will want to go for a good ramble through the old porticoed district of Bologna. Beautiful markets, exquisite food stores. This is truly the food capital of Italy. There are also lots of elegant shops.

Bologna's university is one of the oldest in Europe. The Archiginnasio (next to the archeological museum) is a beautiful old university building. Ask to see the Anatomical Theater on the upper floor.

Giorgio Morandi, perhaps Italy's most important 20<sup>th</sup> century painter, was from Bologna. His museum is in the Palazzo d'Accursio in the beautiful Piazza Nettuno near your hotel. I love this little museum and it will give you a very moving sense of the artist and his work. And make sure you admire the fabulous fountain in the piazza. The work of 16<sup>th</sup> century sculptor Giambologna.

Our favorite restaurant is Da Gianni, a tiny place down a little alley. Ask the hotel to book for you and to give you directions. And above all make sure you try their pastas. Bologna is synonymous with fresh pasta. The housewives can roll it out in their sleep. Sample broadly. And, if you dare, try to favorite local wine: Lambrusco. It is red and sparkling and the perfect complement to the rich cuisine of Emilia Romana.

### **Day 4**

Continue by train to Florence. Take a train to your hotel.

### **Hotel Orto De' Medici**

Standard double rooms

Meet your guide, Elaine, at 1:30, next to the column in Piazza della Repubblica for a half-day "Walk Through History" tour. Grab something quick to eat before hand. She wants to get the walk in early because the late afternoons can be quite hot. Make sure you discuss with Elaine your options for tomorrow. She will have good suggestions.

For dinner, I suggest you go early (since you won't have had a proper lunch) to Il Latini. There is always a gang of people waiting outside, but the restaurant will treat you well while you wait—wine, cheese, prosciutto. And this is the epitome of Tuscan dining. Their soups are fabulous, especially pappa al pomodoro (tomato soup) in the summer. Their steaks are famous. And more prosciutti hang from the ceiling than you will probably see in a lifetime. Breathe the atmosphere of Tuscany! Lovely waiters who have been there for decades. (By the way, Tuscans are not particular fans of pasta, preferring beans and soups!)

### **Day 5**

Free day with possible excursion to Lucca or Siena. (My choices.)

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### Day 6

Meet Elaine for another half day of touring. (You can work out with her when and where to meet.)

Would you like Elaine to book you into the Uffizi for this afternoon? I recommend it. The Uffizi is one of the great museums of Europe.

### Day 7

Train to Rome. Take a taxi to your hotel.

### Hotel Santa Chiara

Standard double rooms

Re the Vatican: It is always crowded. I would try getting to the entrance of the museum around 4:00 in the afternoon. They will be open until six and late afternoons should be manageable. Try the audio guide.

Dinner: Let's see. If it were my first night in Rome I'd probably go to **Pompriere**. See my list. It's in the Jewish ghetto and a number of their dishes are Roman Jewish. Pasta al Limone: yum! Fritto misto with vegetables! And best of all, if they are in season, artichokes and zucchini flowers prepared in the Jewish fashion. Ask the hotel to book. Or, if you want to eat outdoors, equally good and closer to your hotel and in a lovely piazza is **San'Eustachio**. A bit more expensive but very good and very Roman.

### Day 8

Morning tour with Nancy DeConciliis

Sites to include the historic center of Rome and the Roman Forum, Colosseum, etc.

She will meet you at your hotel at 9:00.

I suggest you offer to take Nancy to lunch. She will provide a wealth of further information for you and also suggest more things to do and places to eat.

I suggest the Galleria Borghese for a late afternoon tour. This must be pre-booked. Shall we do this??? The gallery is in the midst of Rome's largest park, the Villa Borghese, which is a longish but lovely walk from the center.

### Day 9

Another morning with Nancy: Baroque Rome.

### Day 10

Pick up rental car and drive to Sorrento.

I think you have already opted to pick up your car at Rome's Leonardo Da Vinci airport in Fiumicino. You can get out to Fiumicino by train or by taxi, but what with your bags and all, I would recommend a taxi. Rome has recently instituted a fixed rate for taxi

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service to the airport. Last I checked it was euro 40. It may have gone up, but ask at the hotel. Taxi drivers occasionally take advantage of foreigners.

If you are interested, Montecassino, the headquarters of the Benedictine Order and the site of a bloody battle in World War II, would make for an interesting stop. The monastery, by the way, was obliterated by allied bombing and then completely and faithfully rebuilt. Or you may prefer driving directly to your hotel for an afternoon of swimming and relaxing.

Take the autostrada to Naples and then out toward Sorrento and the Amalfi Coast.

Directions:

**CAPO LA GALA HOTEL**, is situated along the Sorrento coast road. Coming from Naples, we are 1 km before Vico Equense, 9 km from Sorrento and 10 km from Pompei archeological site.

Triple room with balcony overlooking the sea

Your hotel has a restaurant. I also like very much the Bikini nearby, although it's been a few years since I was there. Also, Vico claims to be the birthplace of pizza. You can order it by the meter. It could be fun to drive in for dinner, and certainly less expensive than eating at your hotel.

### **Day 11**

Meet your guide, Anna, at your hotel at 8:00 am. She will accompany you, by train, to Sorrento where you can catch the hydrofoil to Capri. She will also tell you how you can get back to your hotel on your own.

Capri is a spectacular island. Once you arrive, take the funicular up to the town of Capri and follow crowds into the central piazza. I love to hike on Capri. I recommend a hike out to the Arco Naturale. You'll see signs pointing the way. Nearby the Arco, a natural rock formation in the sea, is a lovely outdoor trattoria for lunch: Le Grottele. You can ask Anna to book this for you: 081 837 5719. Also fun to visit is the ruined villa of Emperor Tiberius, the Villa Jovis. I am also a fan of the Blue Grotto. It is perhaps the original tourist trap, but what a trap! You can only go if the sea is calm. Boats leave from the main marina, where you will have arrived from Sorrento. Big boats take you out to smaller boats that row you into the grotto. And it can take a bit of time as you have to wait your turn.

Annacapri is on the other side of the island and can be reached by local bus. The bus ride is harrowing, with steep drops and hairpin curves. In Annacapri, you can visit the lovely Villa San Michele, the home once of a Swedish doctor/archeologist and today the site of the Swedish consulate to Italy. It is beautiful and filled with ancient artifacts he dug up on the island. Also charming is the little church of San Michele with its whimsical tiled floor depicting the Garden of Eden.

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### Day 12

Meet Anna at your hotel at 8:00 for a half-day tour of Naples, including the archeological museum, Spaccanapoli (the old part of Naples), and a pizza lunch since Naples is reputed to be yet another birthplace of pizza. Afternoon to relax at your hotel.

### Day 13

Meet Anna at your hotel at 8:00 to go by train to Pompeii. Anna will get you back to your hotel by early afternoon.

Leave your hotel and follow the Amalfi Coast to Ravello. Time permitting, you might want to stop off at Positano, a swank and picturesque watering hole. If you feel rushed, I wouldn't worry about missing it since you will already have spent a day on Capri which has a very similar feel.

### Hotel Villa Maria in Ravello

Follow signs when you reach the town.

### Day 14

Free day in Ravello.

Lots of nice pottery shops, a beautiful garden, lovely medieval duomo. You can also drive down to the town of Amalfi and, if you wish, hang out at one of the beach establishments.

### Day 15

Drive back to Rome. You can stop in Vietri for more pottery! Or, if you are interested, you can drive to Rome via Paestum, where there are three beautiful 5<sup>th</sup> century bc Greek temples. (Paestum was a Greek colony.) The temples are as good as anything you will find in Greece. And there is a charming little museum. There's also a great family restaurant where all the locals eat: Nonna Scheppa. Ask for directions. Wonderful local antipasti. And make sure to try the buffalo mozzarella. This is where the very best comes from.

Your final night is at the Rome Airport Hilton. You can eat at the hotel. More interesting would be going into Fiumicino, just a few kilometers away, for a walk along the quay and a farewell fish dinner at La Perla. Ask the Hilton to book for you. Triple at the Hilton for euro 245 including taxes and breakfast. Booking fee.

### Day 15

Return home

For further details:  
Italian Journeys  
4400 Cold Springs Road  
Winston Salem, NC 27106  
336-794-1849  
[www.italianjourneys.net](http://www.italianjourneys.net)