

## Portrait of Italy 2025: Itinerary

**Day 1:** Depart U.S. for Naples, Italy

**Day 2:** Arrive Naples/Amalfi Coast After arriving in Naples this morning, we travel to the storied Amalfi Coast, a popular resort and our base for exploring Italy's Campania region. Listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1997, the Amalfi Coast is one of the most popular and beautiful destinations in Italy. We dine at our hotel tonight, as we will throughout our stay here. *Dinner*

**Day 3:** Ravello This morning we experience this breathtaking coast by sea as we cruise from our hotel to Amalfi Center (weather permitting). We pass by the *Duomo* (cathedral), which dominates the main *piazza*, and then are free to wander as we please through Amalfi's atmospheric waterfront or browse in the small shops that surround the square. We have lunch on our own, then ascend to mountaintop Ravello, with its spectacular gardens and coastal views. It's widely agreed that, at 1,100 feet above sea level, the view from Ravello is stunning; we can see a splendid panorama of the entire Amalfi Coast. *Breakfast, dinner*

**Day 4:** Pompeii/Amalfi Coast/Sorrento Our full-day excursion begins in Pompeii, the city frozen in time by the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius in 79 CE but not excavated until 1748. The ash from this eruption literally "froze" the town in time, leaving exquisite ruins that show us how these ancient Romans lived: vivid frescoes, a forum, and one of the largest surviving Roman amphitheaters in existence. After a tour and lunch on our own here we embark on a breathtaking drive along the winding Amalfi Coast road high above the azure Mediterranean – with stops for photos and in Sorrento along the way. This 31-mile stretch of coastline from Sorrento to Salerno has inspired movies, music, and books; indeed, it is one of the most glorious drives in Europe – or anywhere, for that matter. We return to our hotel late afternoon. *Breakfast, dinner*

**Day 5:** Amalfi Coast/Montecassino/Rome En route to Rome today we visit the town of Montecassino, whose abbey is the mother church of the Benedictine order and a center of medieval art. A German stronghold during World War II, the hilltop abbey was destroyed by Allied bombing then rebuilt as a replica of the 17<sup>th</sup>-century original. We tour the Abbey, then continue on to the Eternal City. We arrive at our well-located hotel mid-afternoon; our tour director will lead an informal walk of the nearby area. *Breakfast*

**Day 6:** Rome From St. Peter's Square to the Spanish Steps, the Forum to the Trevi Fountain, Rome is filled with some of the greatest monuments, museums, and ruins in Western civilization. This morning we tour the heart of this ancient city: the 55,000-seat Colosseum, built in 72 CE to stage gladiator spectacles; and the temples of the Forum, ancient Rome's political and legal center. The afternoon is free to explore on our own; the possibilities endless: shopping along the fashionable Via Veneto; sipping *espresso* in beautiful Piazza Navona; seeing the Pantheon, the city's best preserved ancient building;

tossing a coin into Trevi Fountain; or visiting any number of renowned museums and churches. *Breakfast*

Day 7: Rome Another morning of touring followed by a free afternoon. Today we visit the Vatican for a tour of St. Peter's Square and Basilica, and the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican Museums. Highlights include Michelangelo's *Pieta* in St. Peter's, considered one of the greatest sculptures of all time; his frescoed ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, now restored to its original glory; and art-filled St. Peter's itself, the most important church in all Christendom. The afternoon is free to experience Rome's myriad of delights as we wish. For solitude, the grounds of the Villa Borghese offer a brief respite from the bustle of the city. For shopping, fabulous designer stores (and great people watching!) can be found the famed Via Veneto or the Via del Corso. And lovely Piazza Navona is the perfect spot to sit at a sidewalk café and soak up the vibrant atmosphere of this incredible city. *Breakfast*

Day 8: Rome/Orvieto Leaving Rome, we travel north through a pastoral landscape of gentle agricultural land bounded by mountain wilderness and dotted with traditional villages and medieval hill towns. This is Umbria, known as the "green heart of Italy." Mid-afternoon we reach Orvieto, perched high on a plateau above a vineyard-clad plain. After we check in at our hotel in the heart of the city's medieval quarter, our tour director leads us on an informal walking tour. Tonight we attend a simple cooking demonstration followed by dinner at Zeppelin Restaurant, a Culinary Art Institute in the heart of Orvieto's historic district. *Breakfast, dinner*

Day 9: Orvieto This morning we embark on a guided walking tour of this dramatically set city. We visit the medieval *Duomo* featuring a frescoed chapel by Fra Angelico and Luca Signorelli's masterpiece, *The Last Judgment*. Next we explore the formerly secret passages of Parco delle Grotte, a labyrinth of underground caves used since Etruscan times. Then the remainder of the day is free for independent exploration in this city known for its classic Orvieto white wine and its ceramics tradition dating back to the early medieval era. Today we can sample Orvieto's Umbrian cuisine with lunch and dinner on our own. *Breakfast*

Day 10: Orvieto/Assisi Today's excursion is to Assisi, considered a gem of an Umbrian town, where Saint Francis was born in 1182. Though the town itself is stunning, with inviting plazas, abundant flowers, buildings of white marble, and a pervasive medieval air, the highlight of our day is a tour of the famed Basilica of St. Francis, which has been fully restored after an earthquake caused serious damage to the upper church in 1997. The church is the burial place of St. Francis, and features the priceless *Life of St. Francis* frescoes by Giotto, depicting stories of the saint's life and deeds. We also visit the Basilica of St. Clare, displaying perhaps the world's most famous crucifix: the San Damiano Cross. There's time on our own to stroll the fountain-splashed piazzas and to enjoy local specialties for lunch. We also visit Deruta, where we observe a demonstration showcasing the town's prized hand-painted Majolica ceramics. *Breakfast*

Day 11: Orvieto/Siena/Tuscany Continuing our journey, today we visit walled Siena, whose ochre-colored buildings and ancient ramparts evoke the city's medieval past. Fan-shaped

Piazza del Campo is one of Europe's greatest public squares; its *Duomo*, one of Italy's finest. We set out on a guided walking tour that includes an inside visit to the *Duomo*, housing masterpieces by Michelangelo and Donatello, then have free time for lunch on our own and to explore as we wish. *Breakfast, dinner*

Day 12: Florence A living monument to the Renaissance, Florence is the crown jewel of Tuscany. We discover this splendid city on a full-day excursion that includes a morning walking tour. Then we visit the Galleria dell'Accademia to view Michelangelo's sublime *David*, as well as his pieces for the papal tombs; and the revered *Duomo*, with its stupendous dome by Brunelleschi. This afternoon is free to enjoy Florence as we wish. Tonight we enjoy dinner together at our hotel. *Breakfast, dinner*

Please note: if you plan to visit the Uffizi Gallery during your free time, we highly recommend that you reserve your tickets as far in advance as possible, for 1:30 p.m. on the date we visit Florence. This very popular museum often is sold out and it may not be possible to obtain tickets on site that afternoon. You can reserve tickets online; see the museum's website for details: <https://www.uffizi.it/en/the-uffizi>.

Day 13: San Gimignano We encounter classic Tuscany today as we visit the hill town of San Gimignano, known for the 13 watchtowers that have left its skyline virtually unchanged since medieval times. Later we visit a local winery and enjoy a tasting served with the appropriate *hors d'oeuvres*. This region is best known for the *Vernaccia di San Gimignano*, a white wine made from grapes grown around Tuscany, and for the most well-known of all Italian wines, Chianti. Mid-afternoon, we return to our lodgings, where we have time to relax before tonight's dinner at a local restaurant. *Breakfast, dinner*

Day 14: Tuscany/Venice Leaving Tuscany today, we travel through the Veneto region to Venice, city of drama and *doges*, canals and Canaletto. We arrive early this afternoon; the remainder of the day is free to explore this wondrous city on our own. Venice (and its surrounding lagoon) rank as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of the world's most atmospheric destinations. *Breakfast*

Day 15: Venice This morning's guided walking tour reveals a host of Venetian delights: Piazza San Marco (St. Mark's Square), with its fantastic Basilica; the romantic Bridge of Sighs; and the Rialto district with its bustling market, among many others. Our afternoon is at leisure to enjoy this timeless city as we wish, and the options are endless. Venice is an eminently walkable city, filled with cafes and shops to explore, and riddled with its trademark canals. Take a water taxi or gondola ride, enjoy some gelato after a lunch of Venetian seafood dishes, and revel in simply wandering around this world-class floating city. This evening we gather at a local restaurant for a farewell dinner to bid "*arrivederci*" to Italy and to our fellow travelers. *Breakfast, dinner*

Day 16: Depart for U.S. We depart early this morning for our connecting flights to the U.S. *Breakfast*

*Note: This trip involves considerable walking up hills or stairs, and on uneven or cobblestone streets. You should be in good physical condition to enjoy the tour to its fullest.*