PORTRAIT OF ITALY
From the Amalfi Coast to Venice

2016

With an Optional Post-Tour Extension:
Venice – On Your Own

Itinerary and Accommodations

ITY/ITV: Updated September 2015
DAY 1: Depart the U.S. for Naples

This evening, you depart the U.S. for Europe with a connecting flight to Naples.

DAY 2: Arrive Naples/Transfer to Amalfi

You arrive in Naples this morning and transfer by motorcoach to our hotel just one-and-a-half miles from the town of Amalfi. Along the way you get your first glimpse of the glorious southern Italian coast. Amalfi has been noted as a seaside resort since Edwardian times when it was popularized by the British, and makes an ideal base for excursions along the coast. Tonight we enjoy dinner together at our hotel, as we will throughout our stay here.

Accommodations: Marmorata Hotel
Meals: Dinner

DAY 3: Amalfi/Ravello

We begin our day with an exploration of Amalfi, the largest of the coastal towns (weather permitting, we’ll take a boat one way). We pass by the Duomo, which dominates the main piazza, and then you are free to wander as you please through Amalfi’s atmospheric waterfront or browse in the small shops that surround the square. Legend has it that the Greek demigod Hercules built this coastal town above the place where he buried Melphe, the nymph whom he loved. In 830 CE, Amalfi became one of Italy’s four Maritime Republics, assuming an autonomous status which helped transform it into a wealthy trade center. As the town gained notoriety, however, it became a target for pirates and neighboring states, and many locals were forced to vacate their homes. It wasn’t until the mid-19th century that tourism helped to rebuild this once thriving town, and today its beauty inspires those that visit. After lunch on your own, we continue on to hilltop Ravello, once described as being “closer to the sky than the seashore” by French author André Gide. It’s widely agreed that, at 1,100 feet above sea level, the view from Ravello is stunning; you can see a splendid panorama of the entire Amalfi Coast. We return to our hotel late this afternoon.

Accommodations: Marmorata Hotel
Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
DAY 4: Pompeii/Amalfi Coast/Sorrento

Today’s full-day excursion begins in Pompeii, the wonderfully preserved Roman town that tells a tale both tragic and fascinating. Just before Mt. Vesuvius erupted in 79 CE, many citizens of Pompeii heeded the warning signs and fled the town. But some 2,000 remained to be caught in the eruption’s wake, and became engulfed in volcanic ash. The ash 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 2 ½-hour walking tour of this incredible site, we enjoy lunch on our own. Then we move on to another spot equally renowned: the world-famous Amalfi Coast. 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. During our leisurely excursion, we make several photo stops along this spectacular, hair-raising coastline, and also stop in Sorrento. After this full day, we return to our hotel late this afternoon.

Accommodations: Marmorata Hotel
Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 5: Amalfi/Montecassino/Rome

A full-day transfer takes us to noble Rome. We pay a brief visit to 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 17th-century original. After a tour of the Abbey we continue on to Rome, arriving mid-afternoon. We check in at our well-located hotel then take an informal walking tour of the surrounding neighborhood with our tour director. Dinner tonight is on your own in this sophisticated city with a multitude of restaurants.

Accommodations: Empire Palace Hotel
Meals: 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’s half-day tour, which involves considerable walking, takes us to the ancient city to explore the 55,000-seat Colosseum, completed in 80 CE; and the temples of the Forum, once the seat of Rome’s political power. This afternoon is free to do as you like: perhaps visit the Spanish Steps or Trevi Fountain; walk through the ancient Jewish Ghetto, an interesting area of town with a wonderful synagogue that opened in 1904; or learn more about Rome’s ancient history at the Museo di Roma. The choice is entirely yours, as is the selection of wonderful restaurants for lunch and dinner on your own today.

Please note that the exterior of the Colosseum has been undergoing a three-year renovation project – expected to be completed in April 2016 – to enhance and protect the attraction. A portion may be covered in scaffolding during your visit.

Accommodations: Empire Palace Hotel
Meals: Breakfast
DAY 7: Rome

On this morning’s half-day tour we visit monumental St. Peter’s Basilica, the most important church in all Christendom, where we see Michelangelo’s “Pieta,” considered one of the greatest sculptures of all time. Another highlight is our visit to the Vatican Museums and the splendidly restored Sistine Chapel, whose ceiling is another Michelangelo masterpiece (for the best views, remember to bring your binoculars). The afternoon is free to experience Rome’s myriad of delights as you wish. For solitude, the grounds of the Villa Borghese offer a brief respite from the bustle of the city. For shopping, you’ll find fabulous designer stores (and great people watching!) on 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. Lunch and dinner today are on your own.

Accommodations: Empire Palace Hotel
Meals: Breakfast

DAY 8: Rome/Umbria

Leaving Rome after lunch on our own, we travel through the gentle rolling hills of Umbria, known as the “green heart of Italy.” Passing tiny hill towns and valleys en route, we reach Orvieto, perched atop a volcanic butte 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 of the area. Orvieto is home to one of Italy’s finest Gothic duomos, or cathedrals, which we see during our tour. Tonight we enjoy a small group highlight as we attend a cooking demonstration followed by dinner at Ristorante Zeppelin, a Culinary Art Institute in the heart of Orvieto’s historic district.

Accommodations: Grand Hotel Italia
Meals: 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 the “Angelic Painter” Fra Angelico and Luca Signorelli’s masterpiece, “The Last Judgment.” The story about the Duomo goes that after the communion bread of a skeptical priest reportedly bled onto the altar cloth in a nearby town, the pope commissioned this magnificent cathedral to commemorate the 13th-century miracle. Next we explore the formerly secret passages of Parco delle Grotte, a labyrinth of underground caves used since Etruscan times for such varied purposes as wine and olive oil storage, wells, and World War II bomb shelters. 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 you can sample Orvieto’s Umbrian cuisine with lunch and dinner on your own. Please note that the itinerary for Days 9 and 10 may switch, with the Assisi sightseeing on Day 9 and the Orvieto sightseeing on Day 10.

Accommodations: Grand Hotel Italia
Meals: Breakfast
DAY 10: Orvieto/Assisi

Today’s full-day excursion travels through lovely scenery on our way to Assisi, the birthplace in 1182 of Saint Francis. Though the town itself, with inviting plazas and narrow streets, is stunning, 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 several years ago. Fortunately the lower church and much of the art, including priceless frescoes by Giotto and Cavellini, were not damaged. Most dazzling of all are a series of Giotto frescoes depicting the life of St. Francis. We also visit the Church of St. Claire, displaying possibly the world’s most famous cross. You have the opportunity to stroll Assisi’s fountain-splashed piazzas and enjoy local specialties for lunch on your own before we return to the hotel late this afternoon, stopping in Deruta for a demonstration of traditional ceramic decoration. Dinner tonight is on your own.

Accommodations: Grand Hotel Italia
Meals: Breakfast

DAY 11: Orvieto/Perugia/Siena, Tuscany

On today’s full-day transfer, we leave Umbria for the celebrated region of Tuscany. En route we stop in Perugia, a charming medieval town where there’s time for lunch on your own. Late this afternoon we reach the outskirts of Siena and the Villa Lecchi, our base for touring Tuscany. There’s time before dinner to explore the grounds and gardens of this restored 18th-century estate with beautiful views of the surrounding countryside. This evening we enjoy the Villa Lecchi’s traditional Tuscan fare for dinner.

Accommodations: Hotel Villa Lecchi
Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 12: Siena

Today we visit Siena, another gem of Tuscany with well-preserved city walls; splendid architecture; the lively Piazza del Campo, one of Europe’s greatest public squares; and an extraordinary duomo, featuring masterpieces by Donatello and Michelangelo. After a walking tour visiting the highlights, you’re free for lunch on your own. Following lunch, we enjoy a guided walking tour that includes an inside visit of the Duomo. We have free time to explore on our own before we return to Villa Lecchi where we dine together tonight. Please note that in Siena we must leave the bus outside the historic city center and walk into town then back to the bus.

Accommodations: Hotel Villa Lecchi
Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 13: Siena/Florence

An hour’s drive this morning brings us to Florence, city of Renaissance artists and thinkers, filled with unimaginable art treasures, splendid churches, smart boutiques, and an incredibly storied history. Since buses are not allowed in the historic city center, we are dropped off a short distance from the start of our walking tour, which includes Michelangelo’s masterpiece “The David” at the Galleria dell’Accademia; the soaring Duomo with the dome by Brunelleschi; and the Piazza della Signoria, Florence’s ancient main square. Then the afternoon is free for lunch and exploring on your own. Shopping, of course, is a
popular activity here; leather goods and gold jewelry count among Florence’s modern-day treasures. Or you may prefer to continue admiring the city’s great art at various museums and churches. Please note: if you plan to visit the 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: www.polomuseale.firenze.it/en/musei
We walk back to the bus for the return journey to Villa Lecchi. Please note: this is a longer walk than this morning’s, as our motorcoach must park in a designated area farther away than the point at which we were dropped off. We dine tonight at Villa Lecchi.

Accommodations: Hotel Villa Lecchi
Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 14: Tuscany/San Gimignano/Chianti Region

Wear your most comfortable shoes today – we are doing a lot of exploring and a great deal of it is on foot. This morning we depart for hilly San Gimignano, where you have free time to explore this well-preserved medieval town and enjoy lunch on your own. Take note of the 13 remaining bell towers that have left the 8th-century skyline little changed since medieval times – on a clear day, you can even see them from the terrace of the Villa Lecchi. Please note that in San Gimignano we must leave the bus outside the historic city center and walk into town then back to the bus.

Following lunch, we drive to a local winery where we taste several vintages served with the appropriate hors d’oeuvres. This region may be 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. Tonight we dine at Villa Lecchi.

Accommodations: Hotel Villa Lecchi
Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 15: Tuscany/Venice

This morning we bid farewell to Tuscany as we travel through the Veneto region to Venice, city of drama and doges, canals and Canaletto. After our early afternoon arrival, the remainder of the day and evening is free to begin your explorations of this wondrous city. For dinner on your own tonight, you may wish to sample the seafood dishes for which Venice is known.

Accommodations: Carnival Palace Hotel
Meals: Breakfast
DAY 16: 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; the Rialto district with its bustling market. Your afternoon is at leisure to enjoy this timeless city as you wish. This evening we gather at a local restaurant for a farewell dinner to bid “arrivederci” to Italy and to our fellow travelers.

Accommodations: Carnival Palace Hotel
Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 17: Depart for U.S.

Early this morning, you depart Venice for your connecting flight to the United States.

Meals: Breakfast
PLEASE NOTE

This trip involves considerable walking up hills or stairs, on uneven or cobblestone streets, and at sites of ancient ruins. In addition, Italy does not allow buses to enter many historic city centers, meaning that we will be walking to and from our tour bus, which must park in designated areas. You should be in good physical condition to enjoy this trip to the fullest.

We will do our best to adhere to our printed itinerary. Occasionally, though, unexpected obstacles – or opportunities – may arise that will force us to deviate from the itinerary as written. We would ask you to be open-minded and flexible should we vary the itinerary slightly. In addition, please note that airline schedules are subject to change. We will provide you with updated flight information closer to your departure.

For Land Only Guests

If you choose to purchase Odysseys Unlimited’s Portrait of Italy tour as “land only,” you will be making your own international air arrangements and will join the tour at the first hotel.

While airport transfers and luggage handling at the arrival and departure airports are not included when you purchase a tour as land only, you are welcome to join our motorcoach transfer to the hotel. This service will be provided to you on a complimentary basis.

To join in the transfer, you must be at the Naples airport concurrent with the group of arriving Odysseys Unlimited guests. Look for our representative holding an Odysseys Unlimited sign and you will be directed to the motorcoach. Please note that you must be present when the coach is preparing to leave.

For Portrait of Italy, the currently scheduled flights are as follows:

Day 1  Depart New York  5:25 p.m.  Lufthansa flight # 411
Day 2  Arrive Munich  7:35 a.m.  Lufthansa flight # 1926
          Depart Munich  9:30 a.m.  Lufthansa flight # 1926
          Arrive Naples  11:05 a.m.

Please remember that all flights and schedules are subject to change.

Upon the tour’s completion, you are also welcome to join the group transfer to the airport for your flight home.

It is important to note, however, that a motorcoach may not be used for transfers in all cases. Depending upon the number of guests arriving or departing, we may utilize taxis or smaller vans. At such times, space restrictions will preclude your joining the group transfer and you will be responsible for your own transportation to or from the airport.
DAYS 17 & 18: Venice

No need to transfer anywhere: you’re right at home for the next two nights at Carnival Palace Hotel, your base for exploring Venice to your heart’s delight. The options truly are endless; possibilities include admiring the fine Renaissance art in the Accademia or the striking contemporary pieces at Peggy Guggenheim’s former home. You can wander Venice’s winding streets; sit and watch the crowds in St. Mark’s Square; or visit the colorful nearby islands of Murano and Burano. Whatever you do, you’re sure to be enchanted by this ageless, romantic, and decidedly singular city.

Accommodations: Carnival Palace Hotel
Meals: Breakfast

DAY 19: Return to the U.S.

This morning you’ll transfer to the airport and board your return flight to the United States.

Meals: Breakfast
Marmorata Hotel
Via Bizantina, 3, Località Marmorata
84010 Ravello (Salerno)
Italy
Phone: 011-39-089-877-777
Fax: 011-39-089-851-189

A former paper mill owned by the Camera d’Afflitto family, the Marmorata has been converted into a 37-room hotel overlooking the romantic Amalfi Coast. It boasts a tranquil, secluded atmosphere just 1½ miles from the town of Amalfi. Still owned and personally run by the d’Afflitto family, the hotel features a restaurant, bar, complimentary Wi-Fi internet access, laundry service, fitness center with Jacuzzi, outdoor swimming pool, and access to the sea. Furnished with a nautical theme, each air-conditioned guest room offers a sea view and has a private bath with hair dryer, mini-bar, TV, and phone. Please note that you will need to negotiate a steep driveway down to the hotel.

Empire Palace Hotel
Via Aureliana, 39
00187 Rome
Italy
Phone: 011-39-06-421-281
Fax: 011-39-06-421-28400
www.empirepalacehotel.com

The 110-room Empire Palace is an actual former palace, built in 1870 and completely refurbished and converted to a well-located hotel just a two-minute walk from the Via Veneto. Hotel amenities include a restaurant and bar, fitness center, internet access, and laundry and dry cleaning services. Air-conditioned rooms feature private bath with hair dryer, in-room safe, mini-bar, TV, and phone. Please note that because of the unique nature of this hotel, room sizes vary.
Grand Hotel Italia

Via di Piazza del Popolo, 13
05018 Orvieto (Terni)
Italy
Phone: 011-39-0763-342-065/6
Fax: 011-39-02-3013-2865
www.grandhotelitalia.it

Located in Orvieto’s medieval town center, this refurbished 19th-century building with hanging gardens is close to some of Orvieto’s key points of interest, including the Palazzo del Popolo, Moro Tower, and the Duomo. The intimate 46-room hotel also features a bar, rooftop terrace, library, internet access, and laundry service. Air-conditioned guest rooms have private bath with hair dryer, in-room safe, TV, and phone.

Villa Lecchi

Loc. Lecchi, Staggia Senese
53036 Poggibonsi (Siena)
Italy
Phone: 011-39-0577-930-090
Fax: 011-39-0577-930-087
www.villalecchi.com

An 18th-century villa set amid five acres of private and secluded gardens, this restored hotel is located in Poggibonsi, 11 miles (a 30-minute ride) from Siena, and close to the Chianti Classico region of Italy. The family-owned hotel features a restaurant and bar, internet access, laundry and dry cleaning services, gardens perfect for strolling, sauna, Turkish bath, Jacuzzi, massage and spa services, and heated outdoor swimming pool. Accommodations are provided in three separate buildings on the property, all in close proximity, and guest rooms have private bath with hair dryer, mini-bar, TV, and phone. There are no elevators. Please note that because of the unique nature of this hotel, room sizes and views vary.

Carnival Palace Hotel (also used for Optional Post-Tour Extension)

Paomi S.R.L.
Cannaregio 929
30100 Venice
Italy
Phone: 011-39-041-244-03-20
Fax: 011-39-041-275-93-58
www.carnivalpalace.com

Opened in August 2012, the contemporary Carnival Palace overlooks the Cannaregio Canal in the heart of historic downtown Venice. Along with a garden and waterfront terrace bar, the 67-room hotel offers internet access and laundry service. Guest rooms have Venetian furnishings, private bath with hair dryer, mini-bar, in-room safe, TV, and phone.
Carnival Palace Hotel

Paomi S.R.L.
Cannaregio 929
30100 Venice
Italy
Phone: 011-39-041-244-03-20
Fax: 011-39-041-275-93-58
www.carnivalpalace.com

Opened in August 2012, the contemporary Carnival Palace overlooks the Cannaregio Canal in the heart of historic downtown Venice. Along with a garden and waterfront terrace bar, the 67-room hotel offers internet access and laundry service. Guest rooms have Venetian furnishings, private bath with hair dryer, mini-bar, in-room safe, TV, and phone.