La Dolce Vita - Itinerary

# 15 Day tour of Italy

Welcome to Sojourn real life experiences... we hope that you enjoy exploring the world as much as we do.

La Dolce Vita, the good life, is exactly what this trip is all about. Starting in the Eternal City and ending by the canals of Venice, uncover the best of northern Italy. Experience food, wine, style and character - all the things this wonderful country is famous for - and discover the natural beauty of this spectacular region.

This is how it all started; the trips that made us one of the world's leading operators of small group adventures. And they're still as popular as ever! Original trips are all about variety: the places, the people, the activities, and even the accommodation and transport we use. From home stays to market trips to visits to community projects, there's a new experience every day, with many activities included.

# Itinerary

## Day 1 Rome

You can arrive at any time on day 1 as there are no activities planned until the important welcome meeting at 6:00pm. If your flight arrives too late we recommend that you consider booking a night's accommodation prior to the trip so you can ensure you are able to attend this meeting. We will collect your insurance details and next of kin information at this meeting so please ensure you have all details on hand to provide to your leader.

Your group leader will leave a note at reception telling you where this important meeting will take place. Please ask a member of reception for this information. If you are going to be late please inform the hotel reception.

Check-in time at our joining point hotel is after 2:00pm. Early check-in is not guaranteed, however if you arrive early, luggage storage is available. Speak to the hotel reception on arrival.

Joining Hotel: Hotel Castelfidardo, Rome.

## Days 2-3 Rome/Florence

There is arguably no other city in the world with so much history as Rome and the best way to experience that history is with a walking trip. On the morning of day 2 your Group Leader takes you on an optional orientation walk around Rome where you see some of the world-famous sights such as the Colosseum and Arch of Constantine, the Forum (centre of ancient Rome), the Victor Emmanuel Monument and Piazza Venezia, Piazza Navona, the Pantheon, the Trevi Fountain and the Spanish Steps.

On Day 2 you can make an optional visit to the Vatican Museums and Sistine chapel in the famous Vatican City. (Please note that the Vatican Museums are closed on certain days). You may also choose to visit St Peter's Basilica, either instead of or after the Vatican Museums. Entry to the Basilica is free, and there is a small charge to climb the dome for the ultimate breathtaking panorama over bella Roma.

The Vatican Museum:

The Vatican Museum is closed on some days including Sunday unless it is the last Sunday of the month. Check the Vatican website for these dates. www.vatican.va

Tickets for the Vatican Museum or alternatively the Galleria Borghese can be booked online at www.en.roma.waf.it

In the late afternoon on Day 2 we bid 'arrivederci' to Rome and board our train for Florence (approx. 2 hours).

We have ample opportunity to explore and enjoy all that Florence has to offer, with its excellent restaurants, pavement cafes, bars and other nightlife. Easily discovered on foot, you can see the principal sights of this beautiful 'outdoor museum' of a city - the Pitti Palace, the Ponte Vecchio, the Arno River front, the many statues and monuments of the Piazza della Signoria, the Palazzo Vecchio, the 13th Century Duomo, Baptistry and Belltower and the Santa Croce Church.

Day 3 is a free day in Florence, so we have plenty of free time to take in the many fine museums and art treasures such as the Medici Chapels, as well as time to shop in the markets and in the chic boutiques. Other possibilities are a visit to the Uffizi gallery, one of the top three art museums of the world, or see Michelangelo's famous statue of David in the Galleria dell' Accademia.

Florentine State Museums (Uffizi, Accademia, Pitti Palace, Medici Chapels, Bargello, Archaeological Museum, Davanzati) can all be booked in advance for a fee. Reserve your tickets by phoning (+39) 055 294883 from Monday to Friday 8:30am-6:30pm or Saturday 8:30am-12:30. You can also book online on www.en.firenze.waf.it. We suggest that you book at least 2 months in advance especially for the Uffizi as this museum experiences enormous queues all year round (up to 5 hours).

The individual museums have slightly different opening times and closing days between them but the website www.firenzemusei.it has everything you need to know about all of them. Make your reservations for these museums for Day 3 or morning of Day 4 of this itinerary.

In the evening of Day 3 we can climb uphill to Piazzale Michelangelo for that most photographed of all sunset views across the rooftops of Florence.

Our accommodation in Florence:

For nights 2 and 3 we stay in the centrally located hotel – Albergo Firenze. All rooms have ensuite.

## Days 4-6 Florence/Lucca/Pisa

In the afternoon of Day 4 we take a train (approx. 2 hours) to Lucca, our base for the next three nights.

Lucca is one of Italy's real hidden gems. We stay in our own apartments located within the city ramparts, providing easy access to the city centre and its centuries-old buildings, beautiful churches, charming piazzas and narrow streets.

While in Lucca we will set off for a cycle ride winding along a scenic river through the Tuscan countryside and perhaps stop for a picnic (4 km round the walls and 14 km by the river - approx. 4 hours). With two full days, there is also time to explore Lucca itself plus plenty of opportunities to sample traditional Tuscan cuisine!

We take a half day trip from Lucca by train to the nearby city of Pisa. There's ample time for you view the world-famous Duomo, Baptistry and Leaning Tower.

Our accommodation in Lucca:

For nights 4, 5 and 6 we stay in some unique accommodation - our own private apartments. We have several separate apartments located near the city centre so you may be a short walk away from your other group members and your leader. It is an approximate 25-minute walk from the train station to our main apartment in Lucca. Should you wish to organise a taxi for yourself or your luggage to get to or from the station, your leader will be more than happy to assist in arranging this for you at your expense.

The apartments in Lucca are a real treat. Staying in the city centre allows easy access to all the sights and the restaurants and bars- it is all an easy stroll from your front door. This is your chance to look behind those facades. Each apartment has 2-3 rooms with a shared bathroom. The kitchen is fully equipped, and you can choose to buy your own groceries and supplies for meals. Some of our groups make Italian feasts with local ingredients during their stay. Our apartments are not hotels, there is no reception, room service or cleaning service every day, no televisions or washing machines, but plenty of charm and you just cannot beat the location.

## Days 7-8 Cinque Terre

On the morning of Day 7 we board the train bound for the small but lovely coastal town of Levanto (approx. 3 hours), where we stay for the next two nights. In the afternoon we have time for a dip in the Mediterranean and the chance to explore Levanto with its streetside cafes, parks and seafront promenade.

On day 8 you can walk along this stunning stretch of coast and the path of the Cinque Terre. Olive groves and vineyards cover the mountains that plunge into the sea - the vistas here are breathtaking.

If you're feeling energetic, walking the entire path (12kms and approx. 5 hours walking time) will give you the best taste of the villages and countryside. However, you can jump on a train between any of the villages, or to get back to our base whenever you want. Please note that some sections of the Cinque Terre path can be quite difficult with challenging uphill stretches, narrow paths, steep cliffs and foot bridges.

* Riomaggiore to Manarola is easy and takes 25 minutes on a paved path.
* Manarola to Corniglia is easy and takes approximately 50 minutes on a partly paved and partly rocky path.
* Corniglia to Vernazza is medium level difficulty and takes approximately 1.5 hours on a rocky path.
* Vernazza to Monterosso is more challenging, taking approximately 2 hours on a rocky path.

Our accommodation in Levanto:

For nights 7 and 8 we stay at a centrally located 2 star Pensione – Hotel Europa. All rooms have en-suite.

## Days 9-10 Portofino, Liguria/Piedmonte

Early in the morning on day 9 we take a train (approx. 1 hour) to the Peninsula of Portofino where we store our luggage and have time for a 5-7km walk, finishing at the glamorous resort of Portofino. Walk up to the marvellous viewpoints surrounding the town, or join the rich and famous for coffee on the harbour side and enjoy the people-watching. Then we enjoy fabulous coastal scenery with a boat ride back from Portofino to Santa Margherita.

In the afternoon we travel on by train (approx. 2.5 hours) to the region of Piedmont, which is home to some of the finest and most sought-after wines in Europe. It is also the best place to find 'tartufo' (truffles), a distinctive regional delicacy.

On Day 10 we visit a local winery and sample their vintages. The Ruche' grape variety, is unique to this region of Italy - it is grown in just seven small villages in the province of Asti and produces a ruby-red, intense and aromatic wine.

Our accommodation in Asti:

For nights 9 and 10 we stay at a centrally located small hotel. All rooms have en-suite.

## Days 11-12 Milan/Lake Como

On day 11 we depart on a train (approx. 2 hours) to Milan where we stop for a few hours. We store our luggage at the train station and after visiting the magnificent Duomo (cathedral) and its stunning Gothic roof, there is free time for stylish shopping and cafes - Milanese specialities! Check out the local cafes and indulge in some people watching along the streets and boulevards where the chic display their magnificent sense of style.

Only a short walk from the Duomo is a fabulous museum at the Castello Sforzesco. With an eclectic collection including one of only three unfinished Michelangelo Pieta and a Leonardo da Vinci ceiling the fortress also has pleasant grassy grounds that are free to enter.

The highlight of Milan is a visit to Leonardo Da Vinci's masterpiece, The Last Supper (not included). Please note that your Group Leader cannot assist with tickets to see the Last Supper in Milan. These tickets are limited and generally sell out extremely quickly and well in advance (up to 6 months). If you expressly want to see the Last Supper, and we suggest you do, you need to make arrangements in advance. Day 11 of this trip between 13:30 and 15:00 are suitable times. Note that the viewing is 15 minutes and in order not to lose the reservation, visitors must arrive 15 minutes before the time allocated for the visit. For information and reservations call + 39 02 89 42 11 46 or use this site: www.cenacolovinciano.org or www.en.milano.waf.it

For those interested there is time for the museum at the Castello Sforzesco. It's a short walk from the Duomo and has a fascinating eclectic collection including one of only three unfinished Michelangelo pieta' and a Leonardo da Vinci ceiling. Or see La Scala - the famous opera theatre with an interesting museum attached.

We move on to Lake Como by train and bus, late in the afternoon (approx. 3 hours). It's time to unwind here - relax on the lakeside or explore the shops.

On day 12 we board a ferry to travel across the blue waters to Menaggio and Bellagio. The rest of the day is free to use the ferry pass and explore Varenna, Cadenabbia or Villa Carlotta.

If you're feeling energetic and you would like to explore the mountains around Lake Como, there are plenty of walking tracks from Menaggio to keep you occupied.

Our accommodation in Cadenabbia:

For nights 11 and 12 we stay at the Hotel Riviera - a small hotel by the lakefront. All rooms have en-suite.

## Days 13-15 Venice

On day 13 a train journey (approx. 6 hours) brings us to one of the most unique cities of the world - Venice. We arrive at approximately 3:00pm and then we take you on a brief orientation walk of the city and pass some of the famous sights - the Grand Canal, the old-world shops of the Rialto Bridge, the Palace of the Doge (ruler of Venice), the Piazza and Basilica di San Marco and the Bridge of Sighs.

Day 14 is a free day, so you have ample time to revisit the major sights and wander the narrow, cobblestone streets and spacious piazzas and cross the hundreds of tiny bridges. There are shops, markets, galleries, museums, churches and stunning buildings around every corner. You could also choose to see Venice from a different perspective by taking a gondola ride along the canals.

Day 15 is departure day. There are no activities planned for today and you are able to depart the hotel at any time. Check out time from the hotel is 10:00am. If you are departing later, you can arrange luggage storage at the hotel reception. There may be a small service fee.

Our accommodation in Venice:

For nights 13 and 14 we stay at Casa Villa Rosa - a small hotel near the Train Station (we do not need to do the suitcase shuffle across the city!)

# Included Activities

This is a list of included activities on this trip. All other activities are optional and at your own expense. For a list of optional activities and sightseeing available on this trip, see the optional activities section below. If you choose not to participate in the included activities on this itinerary, the cost will not be refunded.

* Piazzale Michelangelo in Florence
* Cycling in Lucca
* Pisa half-day trip
* Cinque Terre hike
* Walk to Portofino and return boat ride
* Winery visit in Piedmont
* Milan half-day trip
* Ferry pass on Lake Como
* Traghetto across Grand Canal in Venice

# Optional Activities

We list the following optional activities for your information. This is not an exhaustive list and should be used as a guide only.

They are not necessarily endorsed or recommended by Sojourn nor included in price of this trip. If you do any of them, you do so at your own risk and it must be clearly understood that your participation is your own decision and does not form part of your contract with Sojourn.

Rome:

* Colosseum, Roman Forum and Palatine Hill - €11
* Vatican Museums - €14
* St Peter's dome climb - €6
* St Peter's dome elevator - €7

Florence:

* Duomo & Campanile climb - €6
* Accademia - €6.5
* Uffizi Gallery - €12.50

Lucca:

* Puccini Concert - from €15
* Guinigi Tower climb - €4
* Day trip to Barga by bus €8

Cinque Terra, Piedmont & the Lakes:

* Pesto Class in Levanto - €10
* Sea Kayak Hire in Levanto - €5 per hour
* Archaeological Museum in Asti - €5
* Villa Carlotta in Tremezzo - €8
* Trip to Switzerland by Public Bus from Menaggio - €6

Venice:

* Venezia Concerto - €30
* Gondola ride - €80 for up to 5 people
* Accademia Gallery - €7
* St Mark's Campanile - €7
* Doges Palace and Bridge of Sighs - €13
* St. Mark's Basilica Treasury - €2
* Ca' d'Oro - €3
* Guggenheim Museum - €12

# Departure Dates

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Start | Finish | Price |
| 04 Apr | 18 Apr | AUD $2780 |
| 11 Apr | 25 Apr | AUD $2780 |
| 18 Apr | 02 May | AUD $2780 |
| 25 Apr | 09 May | AUD $2780 |
| 02 May | 16 May | AUD $2780 |
| 09 May | 23 May | AUD $2780 |
| 16 May | 30 May | AUD $2780 |
| 23 May | 06 Jun | AUD $2780 |
| 30 May | 13 Jun | AUD $2780 |
| 06 Jun | 20 Jun | AUD $2780 |
| 13 Jun | 27 Jun | AUD $2780 |
| 20 Jun | 04 Jul | AUD $2780 |
| 27 Jun | 11 Jul | AUD $2780 |
| 04 Jul | 18 Jul | AUD $2780 |
| 11 Jul | 25 Jul | AUD $2780 |
| 18 Jul | 01 Aug | AUD $2780 |
| 25 Jul | 08 Aug | AUD $2780 |
| 01 Aug | 15 Aug | AUD $2780 |
| 08 Aug | 22 Aug | AUD $2780 |
| 15 Aug | 29 Aug | AUD $2780 |
| 22 Aug | 05 Sep | AUD $2780 |
| 29 Aug | 12 Sep | AUD $2780 |
| 05 Sep | 19 Sep | AUD $2780 |
| 12 Sep | 26 Sep | AUD $2780 |
| 19 Sep | 03 Oct | AUD $2780 |
| 26 Sep | 10 Oct | AUD $2780 |
| 03 Oct | 17 Oct | AUD $2780 |
| 10 Oct | 24 Oct | AUD $2780 |
| 17 Oct | 31 Oct | AUD $2780 |
| 24 Oct | 07 Nov | AUD $2780 |