

ITALY

Tuscany & Umbria

A Guided Walking Adventure





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Travel Style

This small-group Guided Walking Adventure offers an authentic travel experience, one that takes you away from the crowds and deep in to the fabric of local life. On it, you'll enjoy 24/7 expert guides, premium accommodations, delicious meals, effortless transportation, and local wine or beer with dinner. Rest assured that every trip detail has been anticipated so you're free to enjoy an adventure that exceeds your expectations.

And, with our **optional Flight + Tour Combo**, **Florence Pre-tour Extension** and **Rome Post-Tour Extension** to complement this destination, we take care of all the travel to simplify the journey. Refer to the attached itinerary for more details.



Overview

A walk in the sweeping hills of Tuscany and Umbria is a journey into Italy's artistic and agricultural heart. Your path follows history, from Florence—where your tour commences—to Siena—an important art center distinguished by its remarkable cathedral—and on to Assisi to view the art treasures of the Basilica of St. Francis. Deep in Umbria, you view Gubbio's stunning Palazzo dei Consoli and the Basilica of Sant'Ubaldo. Your stay in the Roman town of Spello—known for its medieval frescoes—inspires with aesthetic balance and timeless charm. Wandering rows of cypress trees leading to a 12th-century Cistercian monastery in southern Tuscany evoke the serenity that has sustained this enchanting countryside through the ages.

The cuisines of Tuscany and Umbria blend refinement and simplicity. In the towns and villages along the route, you dine in fine restaurants and simple trattorias, sampling the sharp pecorino cheese, hand-plucked truffles, and traditionally pressed olive oil. Regional wines—such as the full-bodied Brunello di Montalcino—are some of Italy's most renowned, and you are able to sample them throughout the week, perfectly paired with memorable meals. The accommodations, charming hotels tucked into medieval walls, welcome you in the region's enduring spirit of hospitality.



Daily Itinerary

DAY 1

Arrival in Florence. Transfer to Siena. City tour of Siena; 2 hours, easy (sneakers acceptable). Transfer to Montalcino

After meeting in Florence, you transfer to Siena. The week begins with a walking tour of the historic center of Siena, the atmospheric Tuscan city. With its mixture of Gothic and Romanesque architecture dramatically set on three hills, Siena rivals Florence not only in beauty but also in culture. Following a light lunch of Sieneese specialties, you explore the world-famous Campo square, presided over by the impressive town hall and tower. The Campo is the setting of the celebrated Palio horse race. Your engaging local guide leads you to the Duomo, the main cathedral, with its striking marble façade.

Later you transfer to Montalcino, your home for the next two nights. Unchanged since the 16th century, Montalcino is a charming walled hilltop town and the birthplace of Brunello, one of Italy's finest wines. A magnificent fortress built in 1361 crowns its heights. Your family-run hotel is located at the edge of Montalcino's medieval walls, in the town's quiet pedestrian zone—ideally situated to explore the town's cobblestoned alleyways, stone houses, local shops, and cafés. You are welcomed with dinner in a warm, wood-beamed restaurant in

the heart of town; a glass of Brunello may be paired with a *tagliata fiorentina* (local grilled beef), a perfect start to the week's culinary delights.

Hotel Dei Capitani, Montalcino

Set in a 15th-century building at the edge of Montalcino's medieval walls, this charming family-run hotel features comfortable rooms with wood-beamed ceilings and terracotta floors, stunning views of the Orcia and Arbia valleys, a large garden, and an outdoor, terraced swimming pool.

DAY 2

Torrenieri to Pienza; 6 miles, easy to moderate. Optional afternoon walk from Bagno Vignoni; 2-3 miles, easy to moderate

Today's exploration begins in the outskirts of Montalcino. After an initial short drive to the village of Torrenieri, a dirt lane meanders along rolling terrain between the Orcia Valley and the Crete Senesi (Sienese hills) toward Pienza, the morning's destination.

Lunch awaits at an old Tuscan farmhouse, where your hosts welcome you with an assortment of local pecorino (sheep's milk cheese), cold cuts, homemade preserves and pickles, accompanied by their house wine. Following lunch you are driven a few minutes away to Pienza, the birthplace of Enea Silvio Piccolomini, elected Pope Pius II in 1458. Envisioning the creation of the "ideal Renaissance town," Pius II had the village renamed and entirely redesigned by Florentine architect Bernardo Rossellino. While the village's restructuring came to a halt following Pius II's death, the vision of Humanist urban space and planning was superbly realized in the town center, Piazza Pio II, where the main monuments lie harmoniously along the town's main axis, the town hall opposite the 15th-century cathedral.

An optional afternoon walk departs from the tiny spa town of Bagno Vignoni, where you can soak your feet in the warm waters flowing out of the town's picturesque main square—the only one in Italy that is, in fact, a thermal pool. After returning to the hotel in Montalcino, there is time to relax before walking to dinner in the center of town. There we will join local couple Lina and Domenico for an *aperitivo* in their garden and simple yet tasty meal in their centuries-old home.

Hotel Dei Capitani, Montalcino



DAY 3

Montalcino to Sant'Antimo Abbey; 4-7 miles, easy to moderate. Transfer to Umbria; approximately 2 hours

Today you depart Montalcino on foot. You walk through gentle hills, in the shade of old-growth woods, and skirt vineyards where the famous Sangiovese Grosso grape is grown for Brunello

wine. You might stop to visit an ancient Etruscan settlement, still under excavation, before continuing through farmland, ancient dwellings, wineries, and olive groves to make the dramatic descent to the isolated Romanesque Abbey of Sant'Antimo.

After a truly authentic lunch of pink risotto and wild boar stew, you leave southern Tuscany; the drive winds through the rolling hills and medieval hilltop villages of the Crete Senesi, then descends on the plains surrounding Lake Trasimeno and enters the main valley of Umbria, a region known as the “Green Heart of Italy.”

Your home for the next four nights—an elegant, centrally located 16th-century property—is in Spello, a walled Roman and medieval town. Time permitting upon check-in, a short introductory walking tour provides an orienteering overview. This evening, an independent dinner awaits with your guides’ advice; perhaps a lively local trattoria or a glass of Sagrantino red wine, Umbria’s answer to Brunello, served alfresco on the terrace of your hotel.

Hotel La Bastiglia, Spello

Located in a former 16th-century grain mill in the walled medieval town of Spello, this elegant hotel boasts a wide terrace with panoramic views overlooking the Chiona Valley, an on-site restaurant, prestigious wine cellar, and outdoor swimming pool.

DAY 4

Assisi city tour; 2 miles, easy. Countryside of Assisi; 3-4 miles, easy to moderate

The morning and early afternoon are devoted to an exploration of Assisi. This stunning town sits in a commanding position on the slopes of Mount Subasio and has retained its charming medieval qualities and strong associations with St.

Francis. You tour its multifaceted historical center and the Basilica of St. Francis with a local guide. After lunch at a local pizzeria, there is time for independent exploration of its narrow lanes and inviting shops.

The afternoon offers several options. You may choose to spend more time in Assisi on your own, return to Spello to stroll its picturesque alleys or to relax at the hotel. Alternatively, an easy walking option is offered—this time venturing out of town into the lush, surrounding countryside and olive groves, all the way back to Spello. Dinner this evening is at an intimate restaurant, where you are welcomed with a glass of crisp Prosecco on a panoramic terrace overlooking the Umbrian plain.

Hotel La Bastiglia, Spello

DAY 5

Gubbio; 5-7 miles, easy to moderate

Gubbio, the medieval masterpiece of Umbria, charms with its intimate alleys and surprisingly spacious panoramic piazza, flanked by the stunning *palazzo comunale*. Following a scenic drive, the morning walk's destination is the Church of Saint Ubaldo, perched high on the mountainside overlooking Gubbio. The church is the end point of the annual "Race of the Ceri," a colorful historical festival where locals race *ceri* (giant heavy wooden structures that resemble candlesticks). The walking route passes by limestone outcrops and a tiny chapel, meandering through woods, along a creek, and up a narrow gorge. A lunch of regional specialties awaits at a local restaurant. After lunch, you are free to wander around the historical center and perhaps visit the stunning 14th-century town hall, the Palazzo dei Consoli, with its renowned art museum. Or you may choose to absorb the atmosphere of this Umbrian gem over a gelato or *caff * before the return drive to Spello. Your guides provide ideas for dinner on your own in town; the restaurant or trattoria menu may offer chickpea soup drizzled with olive oil, bruschetta, or *strangozzi*, the regional square-shaped spaghetti.

Hotel La Bastiglia, Spello





DAY 6

Assisi to Spello via the Natural Park of Mount Subasio; 5-9 miles, easy to moderate

After breakfast there is a short transfer to the Natural Park of Mount Subasio, a protected area with serene paths meandering through open meadows and oak and pine woods. Mount Subasio is

the sprawling mountain on whose flank Assisi is built. A haven of subtle beauty and spirituality, it was here that St. Francis preached to the birds, all gathered on tree branches. Hiking in the meadows along the summit of the mountain, you are likely to see grazing herds of sheep, white Chianina cows, and semi-wild horses before descending to lunch in the small, charming hamlet of Collepino. The waiting table is spread with an ample *antipasto* of assorted bruschetta, followed by grilled meats and vegetables.

After lunch you may choose to return to Spello by van or to descend on foot, continuing through olive groves and alongside the ancient Roman aqueduct that once brought drinking water into town along the eastern side of the mountain.

This evening's farewell dinner is at the Locanda del Cardinale in Assisi, where they've glassed in a remarkable dig of Roman ruins and built a restaurant on top. You'll dine on the finest Umbrian cuisine and toast your week's adventures with a glass from the world-class wine cellar.

Hotel La Bastiglia, Spello

DAY 7

Departure from Rome

After a leisurely breakfast, you depart Spello for Rome. Time and weather permitting, a brief stop en route in the walled medieval hill town of Spoleto may allow for a walk and view from the impressive Ponte delle Torri (Tower Bridge). Upon your early afternoon arrival to Rome, you bid farewell to your guides and make connections for onward travels.

ITINERARY CHANGES

Please bear in mind that this is a typical itinerary, and the actual activities, sites, and accommodations may vary due to season, special events, weather, or transportation schedules. We reserve the right to alter the itinerary, since tour arrangements are made up to a year in advance and unforeseen circumstances may arise that mandate change. Itinerary changes are made to improve the tour and your experience.

SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL

Country Walkers is a leader in active travel with responsible tourism an integral part of our core values. Our tours reflect our dedication to best travel practices—and to the preservation of indigenous cultures and the environment. Country Walkers has made a donation on behalf of every traveler to the CW Travelers Fund, which supports designated projects in the communities and habitats in which we travel. We invite you to learn more about our efforts and initiatives for giving back.

Here's just one example that highlights our sustainable practices:

Call of the Wild: To truly immerse yourself in a region's culture, you need to sample its cuisine. On your tour of Tuscany and Umbria, we make sure you experience the best of the land. Consequently, for every meal on your trip, we have chosen local, family-owned restaurants that create traditional meals featuring the finest organic vegetables, mountain herbs, wild mushrooms, rare truffles, and olive oil for which Umbria is renowned. The result? Local economies profit from our visits and you get to sample local delicacies. La Camesena, for example, offers hundreds of dishes based on recipes found in ancient manuscripts (preserved in the libraries of medieval Lizzori). In addition, the restaurant features Chianina beef (a local breed) and lamb raised on nearby mountainsides, handmade pasta, and mint, capers, and chicory cultivated in nearby gardens or growing wild in the village walls.

Tour Itinerary Overview

TOUR MEETING POINT AND TIME

Hotel de la Ville (lobby), Florence, Italy, 10:00 a.m.

Piazza Antinori, 1 (Via Tornabuoni)
50123 Florence, Italy
Tel 011 39 055 238 1805

NIGHTS 1 & 2

Hotel Dei Capitani

Montalcino, Italy
Tel 011 39 0577 847227
Fax 011 39 0577 847239
Email info@deicapitani.it

deicapitani.it

Wireless Internet and hair dryers available. Laundry service unavailable.

NIGHTS 3, 4, 5, & 6

Hotel La Bastiglia

Spello, Italy
Tel 011 39 074 265 12 77
Fax 011 39 074 230 11 59
Email fancelli@labastiglia.com
labastiglia.com

Wireless Internet and hair dryers available. Laundry service unavailable.

TOUR DEPARTURE POINT AND TIME

Roma Termini (Rome's central train station), Rome, Italy, 1:30 p.m.

TRAVEL DELAY AND EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE

If you are delayed while traveling, or experience any unforeseen situation en route to your tour, assistance is only a few, easy steps away:

As a Country Walkers guest, you benefit from 24-hour, toll free access to One Call Emergency Hotline and Travel Assistance. Call the numbers below from anywhere in the world to get immediate assistance (regarding everything from lost luggage, to missed connections, to health concerns or notifying your guides or our local partners of a delayed arrival).

To contact One Call, please use one of the following methods:

By Email: mail@oncallinternational.com

By Text: 603.945.0103

By Phone:

If calling from within the USA: 800.555.9095

If calling from outside the USA: 800.555.9095 or 603.894.4710

When calling from outside the USA, you will need to dial the access code for the country you are calling from (a complete list of access codes, provided by AT&T, can be found on the Country Walkers website under Travel Planning and Travel Resources: AT&T International Access Codes. If you receive an automated response, when prompted, you can then enter either of the numbers above; One Call accepts collect calls 24/7.

In the unlikely event you are unable to connect by phone with One Call, or the region you are calling from does not have an access code, you should speak with a live international operator and ask them to place a collect call to **800.555.9095 or 603.894.4710**.

Should there be any problems placing a collect call (as is occasionally the case depending on the country), dial, email, or text One Call directly and ask them to return your call immediately to minimize any out of pocket costs.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

We offer guests the opportunity to purchase a Travel Protection Plan. Please contact us for details.

Tour Facts at a Glance

TOUR LENGTH (WITHOUT FLIGHT PACKAGE)

7 days, 6 nights

DEPARTURE DATES AND PRICE

Please refer to our website for the most current list of departure dates, scheduled group tour and private tour prices.

TOUR MEETING POINT AND TIME

Hotel de la Ville (lobby), Florence, Italy, 10:00 a.m.

TOUR DEPARTURE POINT AND TIME

Roma Termini (Rome's central train station), Rome, Italy, 1:30 p.m.

ACTIVITY LEVEL

This tour is one of our Guided Walking Adventures, rated easy to moderate, with an average of 4 to 8 miles per day, with shorter and longer options on some days. There are daily ascents and descents, with an average elevation gain of up to 500 feet. Most of the hills are gradual, as opposed to short and steep. The terrain includes cobblestone streets, narrow gravel roads, springy turf, packed dirt trails, and a few stretches of loose gravel. The pace on this tour is leisurely, to allow for stops en route to explore villages, or to visit cultural and historical sites.

INCLUSIONS

- » Two expert, local guides (for groups of 8 or more), with you 24/7
- » All meals except for two dinners; local wine included
- » All accommodations while on tour
- » Transportation from the meeting point to the departure point
- » Entrance fees and special events as noted in the itinerary
- » Destination information (weather, visa requirements, etc.) and other travel assistance available 24/7 provided by One Call International
- » The unbeatable and cumulative experience of the Country Walkers staff

LET THE JOURNEY BEGIN

Prior to your adventure you will be asked to sign a Passenger Participation Agreement and you will receive:

- » Luggage tags
- » List of travel companions and guide biographies

GRATUITIES

Gratuities for all hotels, meals, and services that are included in your tour price will be paid by Country Walkers. Should you wish to tip your Country Walkers guide(s), the standard in the industry ranges from \$10 to \$15 per person, per guide, per day (or \$20 to \$30 per couple, per guide, per day), and can be paid in USD or local currency. Gratuities for your bus driver are included in the tour price, but additional tips are always welcome.

Traveling To and From Your Tour

If you are interested in reserving the **optional Flight + Tour Combo** and **pre- or post-tour extensions**, please refer to the attached itinerary for more details.

TOUR MEETING POINT AND TIME

Hotel de la Ville (lobby), Florence, Italy, 10:00 a.m.

Your guide(s) will be wearing a Country Walkers shirt. Please be dressed for a casual lunch followed by an easy walking tour of Siena.

MOST CONVENIENT AIRPORT

Florence's Amerigo Vespucci Airport (FLR) is the most convenient airport, but requires connections if coming from the U.S.

aeroporto.firenze.it

Rome's Leonardo da Vinci Airport (FCO), also called Fiumicino, has nonstop service from the U.S.

adr.it

Please refer to the Italian Government Tourist Office website, **enit.it**, for additional information about Italian airports and transportation to and from the airport. You may also wish to visit the Italian Tourism Official Website at **italia.it**.

GETTING TO THE MEETING POINT

Upon arrival in Florence (at either the train station or the airport), you may either take a taxi to Hotel de la Ville or prearrange a private transfer through the hotel.

A taxi from Florence's Santa Maria Novella train station to Hotel de la Ville costs approximately 10-15 euros and takes 10 minutes.

A taxi from Florence's Amerigo Vespucci Airport to Hotel de la Ville costs approximately 25-35 euros and takes 35 minutes.

Private transfers must be pre-arranged directly with Hotel de la Ville's reception via email or phone.

RAIL INFORMATION

Approximate travel times for train travel to the Florence central train station, Santa Maria Novella, from various Italian cities are as follows: from Milan: 2 hours; from Pisa Centrale: 1-1½ hours; from Rome: 1½ hours; from Venice: 2 hours; from Turin: 3-4 hours. Please note: the above travel times are dependent upon train type and speed. Additionally, some of these journeys require station changes. For further rail information, including reservations, schedules, and up-to-date fares, please contact either Rail Europe at 800.622.8600 or raileurope.com, or Trenitalia at trenitalia.com (Trenitalia operates most train services in Italy).

PRE-TOUR ACCOMMODATIONS

If you are not reserving our optional Flight + Tour Combo, you may choose to stay at the Hotel de la Ville in Florence, the meeting point for your tour. We suggest making a hotel reservation at your earliest convenience as this hotel is popular.

Hotel de la Ville

Piazza Antinori, 1 (Via Tornabuoni)
50123 Florence, Italy
Tel 011 39 055 238 1805
Fax 011 39 055 265 0924
Email reservation@hoteldelaville.it
hoteldelaville.it

Hotel de la Ville is an elegant, four-star property ideally situated on the famous Via Tornabuoni and a short stroll to the Arno River, the Ponte Vecchio, and Florence's main attractions. All rooms feature luxury and classic décor and the property is renowned for its traditional hospitality.

DELAYS AND LATE ARRIVALS

If you are delayed or miss the scheduled group meeting point for any reason, we kindly request that you contact our emergency assistance provider, One Call International. This service is available 24 hours/day, 7 days/week to assist you with any type of travel delay. Please refer to the emergency contact details on your Tour Itinerary Overview page for One Call International contact details.

TOUR DEPARTURE POINT AND TIME

Roma Termini (Rome's central train station), Rome, Italy, 1:30 p.m.

Depending on your destination, it may not be possible to depart Italy for the U.S. on the last day of the tour. Please check airline schedules carefully. If you plan to schedule return flights immediately following the tour's conclusion, please call your airline directly for specific check-in requirements.

LEAVING ROME

Taxis are readily available at Roma Termini for transfers to city center hotels and/or Rome's Leonardo da Vinci Airport (located 20 miles outside of the city center in the town of Fiumicino). A taxi to the airport takes approximately 45 minutes or longer depending on traffic and costs approximately 55 euros. Be sure to agree to a price on hiring the taxi. Official Rome taxis are white and have a "TAXI" sign on their roof, as well as an identifying number on their doors, on the rear, and inside the vehicle.

Alternately, the Leonardo Express train provides daily nonstop service from Roma Termini to the airport every 30 minutes at a cost of 15 euros per person. The ride takes 30 minutes. Tickets may be purchased at the train station ticket office or via self-service machines within the train station.

RAIL INFORMATION

Approximate travel times for train travel from Rome's Termini train station to various Italian cities are as follows: Florence, 1½ hours; Milan, 3-3½ hours; Pisa, 2½ -3 hours; Naples, 1-2 hours; Venice (Santa Lucia), 3¾ hours; Turin, 4-4½ hours.

Please note: The above travel times are dependent upon train type and speed. Additionally, some of these journeys require station changes. For further rail information, including reservations, schedules, and up-to-date fares, please contact either Rail Europe at 800.622.8600 or raileurope.com, or Trenitalia at trenitalia.com (Trenitalia operates most train services in Italy).

Information & Policies

GUARANTEED DEPARTURES

Country Walkers guarantees the departure of every tour*—no exceptions and no disappointments! From the moment you make your deposit, you can start preparing for your adventure. We take care of all the details to ensure a seamless, small-group experience (with an average of 6 or 7 guests per guide). For best availability, reserve your trip today!

**except in cases of force majeure*

GUEST RESPONSIBILITIES

Each guest has the responsibility to select a trip appropriate to his/her abilities and interests and to prepare for the trip by carefully reading the confirmation materials. To join this trip, you must be in good health and capable of completing activities as described in the day-to-day itinerary. Our in-house experts welcome the opportunity to discuss the tour in more detail. In order to meet your needs, we ask that you please share any relevant physical limitations or health conditions when you make your reservation.

SCHEDULED GROUP INDIVIDUAL RESERVATIONS

Reservations for this tour may be made by calling Country Walkers at 800.464.9255 and providing a \$350 per person deposit. The Balance of your payment (final tour cost) is due 90 days prior to the tour departure date.

SCHEDULED GROUP CANCELLATION POLICY

Cancellations received 91 days or more prior to the tour start date will incur a loss of \$150; cancellations received between 90 and 61 days prior to the tour start date incur a loss of 25 percent of the tour price; there are no refunds within 60 days of the tour start date. Up to 91 days prior to departure, you may transfer your reservation, depending on availability, from one departure to another in the same calendar year at no cost*. Please notify us in writing.

**One transfer per year; afterwards a modest per person transfer fee will apply. Please note that tours with seasonal prices may involve a higher price.*

PRIVATE ADVENTURE RESERVATION & CANCELLATION POLICIES

If you are booking a Private Adventure, a \$500 nonrefundable group deposit is required to secure hotel reservations and guides. Once these arrangements are confirmed, the deposit will be applied as the provider's deposit for the trip. If we are unable to secure the hotel and/or guides for your requested dates, this deposit will be refunded.

Once your Private Adventure is confirmed, your individual \$350 per person deposit is required within 14 days. The balance of your payment (final tour cost) is due 90 days prior to the tour departure date. Cancellations received 91 days or more prior to the tour start date will incur a loss of \$150 (plus the nonrefundable group deposit of \$500); cancellations received between 90 and 61 days prior to the tour start date incur a loss of 25 percent of the tour price; there are no refunds within 60 days of the tour start date. **Please note that Private Adventure tour pricing is based on a guarantee of a specified number of guests. Should the group decrease in size, we reserve the right to alter the per person price, if necessary.**

Italy at a Glance

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS



U.S. citizens: Passports are required and must be valid for at least three months beyond the dates of travel. Visas are not required for stays of up to 90 days. For more information, see travel.state.gov.

CURRENCY

Italy uses the euro (EUR). For current exchange rates, visit oanda.com.

Many businesses in Europe will no longer accept credit cards without PIN numbers (chip and pin cards). Always contact your bank or your credit-card company for details on fees and card use when traveling.

Travel Tip

Have a variety of options to start your trip: ATM card(s), credit card(s), some dollars to exchange, and some euros in small denominations.

TIME ZONE

Italy is in the Central European Time Zone, Eastern Standard Time plus 6 hours. For more information on worldwide time zones, see: worldtimezone.com.

PHONE & INTERNET

Italy country code: +39

Cell phone coverage throughout Italy is extensive, but cannot be guaranteed to be accessible on all American mobile carriers or to function at all times while on the trail or in remote areas. For more information regarding international phone use, please refer to countrywalkers.com/phones.



Internet access is generally very good in towns and villages; however, it is not guaranteed at all of the hotels used on the tour. For more details regarding Wi-Fi availability, please refer to the Tour Itinerary Overview.

LANGUAGE

Italian is Italy's official language.

While knowledge of the local language is not necessary, you may want to learn some fun and useful phrases; see bbc.co.uk/languages/italian or the enclosed Reading Guide for a suggested phrase book.

Travel Tip

- Bringing your own hair dryer or other electrical device? You'll need a travel converter, available at most hardware, travel, or consumer electronic stores.
- For laptops or an electronic device with a dual voltage switch, you'll need the adapter plug but not a converter.

ELECTRICITY

Alternating current of 220V and 50Hz is used in Italy. Plugs have two round prongs. For a full listing of electrical outlets worldwide, see electricaloutlet.org

WEATHER

Italy has a range of climates, depending on the region. In general, spring and fall are ideal for an active vacation, with daytime temperatures in the 60s to low 70s, evenings in the 50s, and occasional short rain showers.

In the northern Alpine areas, summer through early fall is an optimal time to travel. Springtime brings wildflowers, long days, and, on the table, early tender vegetables such as asparagus and artichokes. By late summer and fall, the warm days continue with highs in the low 80s, landscapes take on a golden hue as the grape harvest gets underway, and autumn specialties appear, such as mushrooms and truffles.

For up-to-date forecasts, see qwikcast.com. For historical average temperatures and rainfall, see weatherbase.com.

ITALIAN CUISINE & WINE



Considered one of the world's finest cuisines, Italian food is undoubtedly one of the best things about traveling in Italy. Based on fresh local ingredients, Italian cooking is consequently very regional.

Northern Italy is the home of risotto, polenta, and slow-cooked meat dishes such as *osso bucco*. The cuisine of Tuscany and Umbria in central Italy also features meat and game dishes, such as *bistecca alla fiorentina* (Florentine steak), sausages, and roast pork, as well as vegetable- and bread-based dishes such as savory bruschetta, *ribollita* (vegetable soup), and *panzanella* (bread salad).

Southern Italy and Sicily are justly known for fresh seafood—spaghetti with tiny clams, or a main course of swordfish braised in a light tomato sauce—and fresh vegetables are also prominent— spaghetti with zucchini, or the well-known *insalata caprese* of tomatoes, basil, and fresh mozzarella cheese.

Meals in Italy typically have several courses, starting with an *antipasto* (an appetizer); then a *primo* (first course), which is usually pasta or risotto; a *secondo* (main course), which is a meat or fish dish; and *dolce* (dessert).

Wine has been produced in Italy for millennia, and the country's climate and geography of coastline, foothills, and mountains allow grape growing in 20 regions from the Alps in the north to southernmost Sicily. Restaurants feature their regions' local wine.

Please see the detailed itinerary for region-specific sample menus, local delicacies, and wines.

Travel Tip

Coffee is served throughout the day in its many different ways. Italians tend to drink *caffè latte* or cappuccino until about 11:00 a.m. (a *latte* is a cup of hot milk). After 11:00 a.m., they usually drink *un caffè* (espresso). If you'd like it with a little milk you should order a *macchiato*. You'll need to specify if you want it *con latte caldo* (with hot milk), or *con latte freddo* (with cold milk), or *con schiuma* (with foam). Lastly, there's no charge to stand at the bar with a drink, but a small fee is added to the bill when you sit at a café table.

LIFE IN ITALY



Shopping hours

Shops and stores are generally open Monday to Saturday between 9:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m., and from 3:30 to 7:30 p.m.; department stores and supermarkets are open all day from 9:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. Open-air markets generally open from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., although in larger cities such as Florence, open-air markets are typically open all day, even on Sundays.

Meal times

Breakfast is served at hotels from 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 or 10:30 a.m. Lunch is served in restaurants from 12:30 to 2:30 p.m. and dinner is usually served from 7:30 to 11:00 p.m. (Restaurant meal times may vary by region, trending from earlier to later as you travel from north to south.)

Travel Tip

Most restaurants have a “cover charge” or *il coperto*, a per-person fee of one to three euros that is added to your final bill. It is a legitimate practice and it is considered the “fee” for the place setting, the bread, tap water (which is fine to drink), and breadsticks.

Tipping

Tipping in restaurants is not compulsory in Italy. In restaurants the menu or bill indicates *servizio incluso*, meaning “service is included.” However, locals tend to leave a small amount in coins after a meal or a coffee—roughly one to two percent of the total, or one to two euros for a meal of up to 50 euros. For a coffee or a drink in a bar or café, 20 to 50 euro cents is appropriate.

Taxi drivers aren’t generally tipped, but you could round up the total, letting the driver keep the change. For luggage assistance, a small tip of one to three euros is appropriate.

TRAVEL RESOURCES

National Italian tourist board official sites

italia.it and enit.it

Italian public holidays

To assist in travel planning, it may be helpful to be aware of Italian public holidays, festivals, or calendars of events. Visit the Italian tourist board’s website noted above, then click on Useful Information, More Information, and National Public Holidays. For local events, visit the regional tourism websites (links can be found on the region’s page on italia.it, in the Discover Italy section).

Travel Tip

Be aware that you may need to validate your train ticket by “punching” it before boarding, using a small machine located on the train platform, which stamps the time and date on it.

TRAVEL IN ITALY

Trains

Trenitalia: trenitalia.it (Italy’s national train company)

Raileurope: raileurope.com or 800.622.8600, a U.S.-based company that provides schedules, reservations, and ticketing for all European train networks (their multi-day/-week/-month passes in one country or combinations of countries may be an economical and

convenient choice for European train travel.)



Other local transportation

In addition to its excellent rail network, Italy also has several regional airlines, many regional bus lines, and, in coastal and lake regions, local ferries. Taxis are available at all major airports, train stations, and in smaller towns, and can be reserved in advance (your hotel can usually provide assistance).

Most major car rental agencies are available at Italian airports and train stations. For more information contact Country Walkers, or go to italia.it, and click on “Useful Information.” For driving, you can further navigate to “Rules to drive in Italy.”

Museum information and online reservations

tickitaly.com

Packing List

PACKING TIPS

Pack light! Keep in mind there will be times you may have to carry your own luggage short distances, especially before and after your Country Walkers tour. Due to space constraints, we require you to limit your luggage to one medium piece (approximately 18x15x29 inches or 8,000 cu. in.) and one small carry-on, per person. We recommend packing any personal necessities, medications, your hotel itinerary/emergency contact information, your hiking boots (or shoes), and extra clothes in your carry-on luggage in the event that your baggage is delayed. We suggest leaving valuable jewelry at home. A copy of your passport or other important documents should be kept in a separate area of your luggage. Always be alert when carrying a purse, camera, money belt, or backpack in busy cities, airports, and train stations.

FOOTWEAR

- » Hiking boots or shoes. There are many brands to choose from. Proper fit is crucial, so try on new boots or shoes while wearing socks you plan to use on tour. Be sure to break in new footwear well before your tour begins. By the time you're ready to join your walking tour, you should be able to complete 4-8 miles of walking without discomfort. We require lightweight boots or shoes with proper ankle support and good tread to ensure stability on all types of terrain. Waterproof footwear keeps feet dry in heavy rain and water resistant footwear keeps feet dry in heavy dew. Country Walkers reserves the right to deny participation to any guest not wearing appropriate footwear.
- » Comfortable shoes for evening strolls on uneven, cobblestone streets
- » Synthetic, moisture-wicking socks (cotton socks are not recommended for walking as they will quickly cause blisters)
- » Blister remedy

CLOTHING

- » Lightweight, wash-and-wear long pants
- » Long-sleeved, wash-and-wear shirt
- » T-shirts and shorts
- » Polar fleece or light wool pullover (it will keep you warm even when wet)

- » Dinner attire: dress is smart casual
- » Light jacket or sweater for evening strolls and alfresco dining
- » Church attire: exposed shoulders and knees are not permitted when visiting most churches in Italy. Men may wear long Bermuda-style shorts (to the knee) and women may wear longer skirts (to the knee). Convertible zip-off pants are a good option for both men and women on days that combine hiking and church visits. Women may carry a light scarf, shawl, or jacket to cover bare shoulders and upper arms when needed.

OUTERWEAR

- » Waterproof rain gear: jacket, pants, hat, or hood
- » Windbreaker with hood (your rain gear may be suitable)
- » Hat with a broad brim or visor

EQUIPMENT

- » Pack (minimum size of 25L): large enough to carry water, extra clothing, rain gear, and personal items (camera, etc.)
- » Waterproof cover for pack
- » Water bottle, canteen, or CamelBak-type water reservoir or hydration pack to carry your own water while walking (equivalent of one liter)
- » Sunblock and lip balm
- » Insect repellent
- » Sunglasses
- » Toilet kit for when facilities are not available on the walks. Include zip-lock baggies, tissues, and moist towelettes, which can be disposed of upon return to the hotel.
- » Personal first-aid kit including any medications you ordinarily take (in their original container)

OPTIONAL

- » Telescopic walking sticks. (Please note that while telescopic walking sticks are recommended for this tour, they are not provided by Country Walkers. Therefore please plan on bringing your own should you wish to use them.)
- » Binoculars

- » Bathing suit for optional swimming in hotel pools
- » Flip flops or water sandals
- » Camera and charger and/or extra batteries
- » Zip-lock bags (to keep camera and valuables dry)
- » Small notebook and pen
- » Field guides (see enclosed reading list)
- » Folding umbrella
- » Bandana
- » Washcloth (many European hotels do not provide them)
- » Hand sanitizer and/or moist towelettes
- » Alarm clock