



Italy 2025 Itinerary

Travel Dates: May 16th, 2025 – May 25th, 2025

DAY 1 May 16th

Fly overnight to Venice.

DAY 2 May 17th

Venice

Meet your Field Director at the airport. Enjoy dinner in the Venice region.

DAY 3 May 18th

Venice

The city of Venice (*Venezia*) is located on the Adriatic Sea in northern Italy, which includes several famous islands such as Lido di Venezia, Murano and Burano. Travelling around Venice is a unique experience. Instead of a reliance on roads, hundreds of canals and waterways connect the city, including the more than 100 islands that are part of Venice. Being surrounded by so much water, Venice is famous for its bridges. The oldest, the Rialto Bridge, spans the Grand Canal. Venice is also well known for the many squares around town, such as the Piazza San Marco where Saint Mark's Basilica is located. Venice has even more to offer – palaces (Ca' d'Oro, Palazzo Ducale), museums (Galleria dell'Accademia, Museo Correr), and churches (Basilica di Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari and San Zaniolo) with rich histories and beautiful architecture.

Take a guided tour of Venice. With your local expert guide, you will see:

- St. Mark's Square, Venice's primary square and center of cultural importance, where Galileo presented and demonstrated the very first telescope.
- St. Mark's Campanile, a 323-foot bell tower that introduced a rudimentary method of more consistent timekeeping in and around Venice.
- St. Mark's Clock, an astronomical clock that describes the lunar phases, relative positions of the five naked-eye planets, and the position of the Sun in the zodiac.
- Grand Canal, Venice's major waterway filled with gondolas.

Visit the colorful venetian island of Burano.

Learn about glassblowing from a local craftsman and watch expert craftsmen spin molten-hot wares.

DAY 4 May 19th

Venice • Florence

Florence (*Firenze*), capital of the Tuscany region, showcases several museums, palaces, and churches with some of the greatest artistic treasures in the world. As the birthplace of the Renaissance, settings around Florence such as the Cathedral, the Baptistery, the Uffizi, the Bargello, and the Accademia represent the pinnacle of human artistic achievement. Churches (Santa Maria Novella and Santa Croce) are stunning art galleries a library (San Lorenzo) is a magnificent architectural creation of Michelangelo. Outdoor explorations beyond the many squares and plazas include Boboli Gardens or an enchanting view of the city from the hilltop church San Miniato al Monte. Or stroll along the oldest streets in the city until you reach the Arno River, then cross the Ponte Vecchio bridge and experience the "newer" Oltrarno quarter of Florence.

Take a guided tour of Florence. With your expert local guide, you will see:

- Piazza della Signoria, lined with classic statues and references to the abandonment of the Florentine style calendar in favor of the more modern Gregorian calendar.
- Ponte Vecchio, a medieval bridge where many famed leather and gold craftsmen keep shop, and an ancient sundial from the 13th century.
- Basilica of Santa Croce, where Michelangelo, Machiavelli, and Galileo are buried, with an ornate astronomy-themed tomb dedicated to Galileo.
- Gates of Paradise, bronzed doors that depict scenes from the Old Testament.

Enjoy dinner in Florence.

DAY 5 May 20th

Florence/Pisa

Pisa, famous for its leaning tower, is also the birthplace of Galileo. The father of observational astronomy, as the story goes, tested his theory about gravity by dropping objects from the tower and observing their behavior as they plummeted to the ground. Pisa has more to offer than leaning towers, with its Field of Miracles being considered one of the finest architectural complexes in the world. Also straddling the Arno River, Pisa offers more interesting plazas and beautiful churches to explore.

Half-day excursion to Pisa.

- Enjoy a guided tour of the Field of Miracles, a walled compound that includes four great religious edifices – Pisa Cathedral, Pisa Baptistery, Leaning Tower of Pisa, and the Monumental Cemetery
- See the 12th-century Leaning Tower where Galileo was said to have developed his laws of gravity.
- Visit the adjacent cathedral and baptistery, which contain exquisite marble pulpits carved in the Gothic style by Nicola and Giovanni Pisano.

DAY 6 May 21st

Florence

- Visit the Accademia to admire Michelangelo's statue of David and explore the winding halls of busts.
- Visit a bottega, where Italian artisans will share the local heritage and story through their creations.
- See the Museo Galileo, which houses his only two extant telescopes and the lens he used to discover the moons of Jupiter.
- Visit the Florence Cathedral to observe the Toscanelli line – the first meridian line installed in a church.

DAY 7 May 22nd

Florence • San Gimignano • Rome

San Gimignano is a walled hill town just outside of Florence, with medieval towers dotting the skyline and the Piazza della Cisterna, a triangular “square” lined with medieval houses. Walls built in the 13th century surround much of the town, including the Duomo di San Gimignano with its frescoes by Ghirlandaio.

- Visit the San Gimignano Duomo and see its UNESCO World Heritage frescoes.

Rome (Roma), the capital of Italy with a population of nearly 3 million, sits along the banks of the river Tiber. Founded on top of seven hills, the area around Palatine Hill and Capitoline Hill would later become the center of power of the enormous Roman Empire. The sprawling ruins of the Forum and the enormous Colosseum where many gladiators fought are found here. The Pantheon with its characteristic round, open roof is one of the best kept buildings from ancient Roman times. Travel back in time along the Via Appia, one of the oldest roads in Rome. The entire city serves as one magnificent museum of Italian history and culture.

Take a self-guided walking tour of Rome.

- Trevi Fountain, the largest Baroque fountain in the city and one of the most famous fountains in the world. The fountain, part of the ancient aqueduct, is lined with impressive sculptures and carvings.
- Pantheon, built to honor all the gods of Rome, where the entire building acts as astronomical instrument. This round temple of the gods with immense granite Corinthian columns sits under a concrete dome with an oculus opening to the sky at the center.
- Piazza Navona, a lively square lined with restaurants and shops.
- Spanish Steps, Europe's widest staircase and the Trinità dei Monti sundial. This monumental stairway links the Trinità dei Monti church with the Spanish Embassy to the Vatican.

Enjoy dinner in Rome.

DAY 8 May 23rd

Rome

Take a guided tour of Rome with your expert local guide. You will visit:

- Roman Forum, former heart of the Roman Empire where Julius Caesar gave many speeches. Several ruins were constructed with astronomical alignments in mind.
- The Colosseum, the famous arena used for gladiator combat.

Spend time exploring Rome on your own.

DAY 9 May 24th

Rome

Vatican City, surrounded by Rome, is the smallest sovereign city-state in the world – 1/8 the size of Central Park in New York City. The Vatican is the headquarter of the Roman Catholic Church, the residence of the Pope, and the location of one of the oldest active astronomical observatories in the world. Vatican City gained its independence from Italy in 1929, deriving much of its income from tourism. The Vatican is home to St. Peter's Basilica and St. Peter's Square, each an architectural masterpiece.

With your expert local guide, you will visit:

- Sistine Chapel and Michelangelo's breathtaking frescoes which may include hidden references to Copernicus and his heliocentric model of the solar system.
- St. Peter's Basilica, a site of religious and historical significance over which the Pope presides. Hidden within the square is a simple clock and calendar.
- Visit the Rome Observatory on Monte Mario.

DAY 10 May 25th

Depart for home.