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Cinque Terre

For the sinful inhabitants of the Cinque Terre's five sherbert-coloured villages – Monterosso, Vernazza, Corniglia, Manarola and Riomaggiore – penance involved a hike up the vertiginous cliffside to the sanctuary to appeal for forgiveness. Scale the same trails today through terraced vineyards, and as the heavenly views unfurl, it's hard to think of a more benign punishment. For those seeking less exertion, hop from one village to the next on the train.

Riomaggiore (p154)



5

Assisi

Follow in the footsteps of St Francis to his home town of Assisi. Incredibly, this Umbrian hilltop centre seems to have changed little since the peace-loving saint and his friend St Clare lived here in the 12th century, and it's a thrilling experience to walk its narrow medieval lanes to the Basilica di San Francesco. This, the town's great landmark church, is one of Italy's most revered religious sites, a serene Gothic basilica adorned with a breathtaking series of frescoes.





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Plan Your Trip

Ten-Day Itinerary

PIERRE OGIRON/GETTY IMAGES ©



Rome to the Lakes

This 10-day jaunt through central and northern Italy offers a vivid snapshot of the country's beauty. From Rome's ancient wonders to Tuscan treasures, a spectacular stretch of coastline and romantic lakes, it's a spellbinding trip.

1 Rome (p34)

Spend your first two days in Rome. After experiencing Michelangelo's **Sistine Chapel**, summit **St Peter's Basilica**, then hit the historic centre for **Piazza Navona** and the **Pantheon**. Toss a coin into the **Trevi Fountain** and thrill at the sight of the **Colosseum**.

➔ **Rome to Assisi**

🚗 **3¼ hours** Two daily departures

2 Assisi (p156)

Follow the pilgrims to Assisi, the Unesco-listed home town of St Francis. Navigate your way to the **Basilica di San Francesco**,

where you can see the saint's life unfold in a technicolour fresco cycle by Giotto.

➔ **Assisi to Florence**

🚗 **2½ hours** Departures every two hours

3 Florence (p94)

Continue northwest to Florence to go face to face with celebrated masterpieces: Brunelleschi's **Duomo** cupola, Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* in the **Galleria degli Uffizi** and Michelangelo's *David* in the **Galleria dell'Accademia**.

➔ **Florence to Lucca**

🚗 **1¼ to 1¾ hours** Hourly departures

4 Lucca (p138)

From Florence, head to the charming walled city of Lucca. Check out the striking **Cattedrale di San Martino** and join the locals for a *passeggiata* (evening stroll) on the monumental walls.

➔ **Lucca to Pisa**

🚗 **30 minutes** Half-hourly departures



From left: Leaning Tower of Pisa and Pisa's Duomo (p139); Manarola (p153), Cinque Terre



FRANCESCO RICCA IACOMINO/GETTY IMAGES ©

5 Pisa (p139)

Pisa is a must on anyone's Tuscan itinerary. Make a beeline for the **Piazza dei Miracoli**, where you'll find the **Leaning Tower** alongside Pisa's magnificent Duomo and cup-cake Battistero.

➔ **Pisa to Cinque Terre (Riomaggiore)**

🚗 **1¼ to 1¾ hours** Via La Spezia; up to 15 daily departures

6 Cinque Terre (p144)

Italy's coastal scenery is a sight to behold on the Cinque Terre, a glorious stretch of coastline punctuated by five picturesque villages. This is the place to get in some serious walking.

➔ **Riomaggiore to Milan**

🚗 **3¾ to 4½ hours** Via Genoa Piazza Principe; hourly departures

7 Milan (p198)

Suitably recharged, head across to high-octane Milan, home of the outlandishly Gothic **Duomo** and legendary opera house **Teatro alla Scala** (La Scala). Make sure you're booked to see Leonardo da Vinci's *The Last Supper*.

➔ **Milan to the Italian Lakes**

🚗 To Como **30 minutes to 1 hour** at least hourly; to Stresa (Lago Maggiore) **1¼ hours** hourly departures

8 Italian Lakes (p218)

See out your trip with a couple of days lakeside. Take your pick between the belle époque charms of **Lago Maggiore**, or scenic **Lago di Como**, hang-out of Hollywood stars and Midas-rich sheiks.

Plan Your Trip

If You Like...



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Masterpieces

Sistine Chapel More than just Michelangelo's show-stealing ceiling, this world-famous chapel in Rome also features work by Botticelli and Ghirlandaio. (p41)

Galleria degli Uffizi

Cimabue, Botticelli, da Vinci, Raphael, Titian: Florence's blockbuster art museum delivers a who's who of artistic deities. (p104)

Museo e Galleria Borghese

A perfectly sized serve of Renaissance and baroque masterpieces in an elegant villa in Rome. (p50)

Basilica di San Francesco

See just how Giotto revolutionised art with his masterly works in this church in Assisi. (p160)

Museo del Novecento

Modigliani, de Chirico, Kandinsky, Picasso, Fontana: a first-class 20th-century art museum in modernist Milan. (p208)

Villa dei Misteri, Pompeii

The Dionysiac Frieze in the dining room of this grand villa is one of the world's largest ancient frescoes. (p264)

Palazzo Grassi

The exceptional contemporary collection of French billionaire François Pinault is showcased against Tadao Ando interior sets in Venice. (p171)

Museo Archeologico Nazionale

Naples' premier museum showcases one of the world's finest collections of ancient Greek and Roman art. (p236)

Fabulous Food

Seafood So fresh you can eat it raw in Venice and Sicily.

Pizza Italy's most famous export, but who makes the best: Naples or Rome?

Tuscan T-bone Carnivores drool over Florence's *bistecca alla fiorentina* (T-bone steak), hailing from Tuscany's prized Val di Chiana.

Sicilian specialities Buxom eggplants, juicy raisins, fragrant couscous and velvety marzipan – cross-cultural Sicily puts the fusion in Italian cuisine.

Gelato Innovative flavours ready for licking at Rome's gelaterie artigianale.

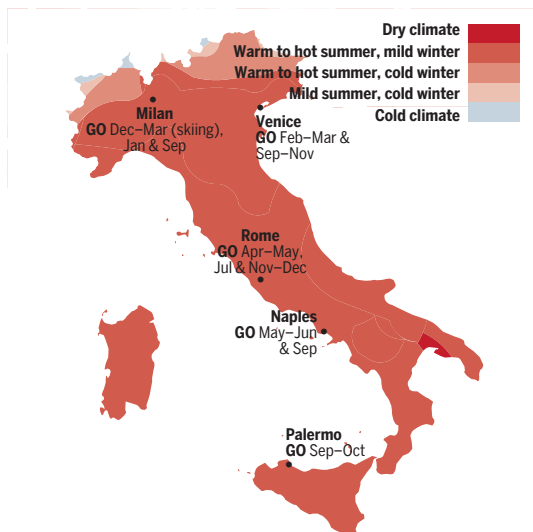
Cicheti Venice's answer to tapas.

Plan Your Trip

Need to Know



When to Go



High Season (Jul–Aug)

- Queues at sights and on the road, especially in August.
- Prices also rocket for Christmas, New Year and Easter.
- Late December to March is high season for skiing.

Shoulder (Apr–Jun & Sep–Oct)

- Good deals on accommodation, especially in the south.
- Spring is best for festivals, flowers and local produce.
- Autumn provides warm weather and the grape harvest.

Low Season (Nov–Mar)

- Prices up to 30% less than in high season.
- Many sights and hotels closed in country areas.
- A good period for cultural events in large cities.

Currency

Euro (€)

Language

Italian

Visas

Generally not required for stays of up to 90 days (or at all for EU nationals); some nationalities need a Schengen visa.

Money

ATMs at every airport, most train stations and widely available in towns and cities. Credit cards accepted in most hotels and restaurants.

Mobile Phones

Local SIM cards can be used in European, Australian and some unlocked US phones. Other phones must be set to roaming.

Time

Central European Time (GMT/UTC plus one hour)

Room Tax

Visitors may be charged an extra €1 to €7 per night 'room occupancy tax'.