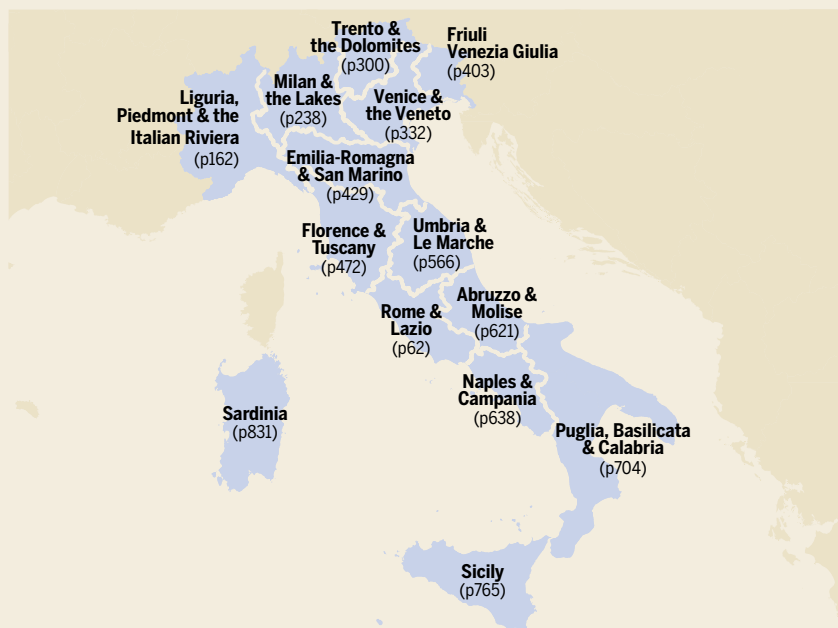




Italy



THIS EDITION WRITTEN AND RESEARCHED BY

Cristian Bonetto

Abigail Blasi, Kerry Christiani, Gregor Clark, Duncan Garwood, Paula Hardy, Virginia Maxwell, Brendan Sainsbury, Helena Smith, Donna Wheeler

PLAN YOUR TRIP

| | |
|-----------------------------------|----|
| Welcome to Italy..... | 6 |
| Italy Map | 8 |
| Italy's Top 18..... | 10 |
| Need to Know | 20 |
| First Time Italy | 22 |
| What's New | 24 |
| If You Like..... | 25 |
| Month by Month..... | 29 |
| Itineraries | 33 |
| Eat & Drink Like a Local | 39 |
| Outdoor Experiences ... | 46 |
| Travel with Children.... | 54 |
| Regions at a Glance.... | 57 |

ON THE ROAD

ROME & LAZIO 62

| | |
|-----------------------|-----|
| Rome | 66 |
| Lazio..... | 151 |
| Ostia Antica..... | 151 |
| Tivoli..... | 153 |
| Cerveteri | 154 |
| Tarquinia | 154 |
| Civitavecchia..... | 155 |
| Viterbo | 155 |
| Castelli Romani | 158 |
| Palestrina..... | 159 |
| South Coast | 160 |
| Isole Pontine..... | 161 |

LIGURIA, PIEDMONT & THE ITALIAN

RIVIERA..... 162

| | |
|---------------------------|-----|
| Liguria | 166 |
| Genoa..... | 166 |
| Around Genoa..... | 177 |
| Riviera di Levante..... | 179 |
| Cinque Terre | 183 |
| Around Cinque Terre | 191 |
| Riviera di Ponente | 193 |

Piedmont..... 197

| | |
|---|-----|
| Turin | 197 |
| The Milky Way..... | 212 |
| Southern & Eastern Piedmont | 214 |
| Varallo & the Valsesia..... | 226 |
| Valle d'Aosta | 227 |
| Aosta | 227 |
| Courmayeur | 233 |
| Parco Nazionale del Gran Paradiso..... | 235 |
| Valtournenche | 237 |

MILAN & THE LAKES 238

Milan..... 242

| | |
|-------------------|-----|
| Around Milan..... | 260 |
|-------------------|-----|

The Lakes..... 261

| | |
|---------------------|-----|
| Lago Maggiore | 261 |
| Lago d'Orta | 267 |
| Lago di Como | 269 |
| Lago d'Isèo | 278 |
| Lago di Garda | 279 |

The Po Plain 288

| | |
|---------------|-----|
| Bergamo | 288 |
| Brescia..... | 293 |
| Mantua..... | 294 |
| Cremona | 298 |

TRENTO & THE DOLOMITES 300

Trentino..... 301

| | |
|--|-----|
| Trento..... | 301 |
| Rovereto..... | 307 |
| Brenta Dolomites..... | 308 |
| Val di Non, Val di Sole & Val di Rabbi..... | 313 |
| Val di Fiemme..... | 315 |
| Val di Fassa | 316 |

Alto Adige (Südtirol)..... 317

| | |
|--|-----|
| Bolzano (Bozen)..... | 317 |
| Merano (Meran)..... | 322 |
| Val Venosta (Vinschgau)..... | 325 |
| Parco Nazionale dello Stelvio | 325 |
| Val Gardena (Gröden/ Gherdëina) | 326 |
| Alpe di Siusi & Parco Naturale Sciliar-Catinaccio..... | 327 |
| Val Badia & Alpe di Fanes..... | 328 |
| Val Pusteria (Pustertal)..... | 330 |



CLASSIC ITALIAN DESIGN
P284



CINQUE TERRE P183

Contents

VENICE & THE VENETO 332

| | |
|--------------------------------|------------|
| Venice | 336 |
| The Veneto | 379 |
| Brenta Riviera | 380 |
| Padua | 381 |
| Vicenza..... | 386 |
| Verona | 389 |
| Verona's Wine Country | 395 |
| Prosecco Country | 396 |
| Veneto Dolomites..... | 397 |

FRIULI VENEZIA GIULIA 403

| | |
|------------------------------------|-----|
| Trieste..... | 405 |
| Muggia..... | 412 |
| Il Carso..... | 413 |
| Gorizia | 413 |
| Palmanova..... | 414 |
| Aquileia | 415 |
| Grado | 416 |
| Around Grado | 417 |
| Laguna di Marano | 417 |
| Lignano | 418 |
| Pordenone..... | 418 |
| Sacile | 419 |
| Udine | 419 |
| Cividale del Friuli | 425 |
| San Daniele del Friuli | 426 |
| North of Udine | 426 |
| Tolmezzo & Carnia..... | 427 |
| Tarvisio & the Giulie Alps..... | 428 |

EMILIA-ROMAGNA & SAN MARINO.... 429

| | |
|-----------------------------|------------|
| Emilia-Romagna | 431 |
| Bologna | 431 |
| West of Bologna..... | 443 |

| | |
|-------------------------|------------|
| East of Bologna | 455 |
| San Marino | 470 |

FLORENCE & TUSCANY..... 472

| | |
|---------------------------------------|------------|
| Florence | 475 |
| Northwestern Tuscany | 508 |
| Pisa | 508 |
| Lucca | 515 |
| Viareggio | 520 |
| Pietrasanta | 520 |
| Livorno..... | 521 |
| Isola d'Elba | 524 |
| Central Tuscany | 526 |
| Siena | 527 |
| Chianti | 538 |
| Val d'Elsa | 544 |
| Val d'Orcia & Val di Chiana..... | 551 |
| Southern Tuscany | 556 |
| Massa Marittima | 556 |
| Città del Tufa..... | 557 |
| Eastern Tuscany | 559 |
| Arezzo | 559 |
| Sansepolcro | 562 |
| Cortona | 564 |

UMBRIA & LE MARCHE..... 566

| | |
|--------------------------------|------------|
| Umbria | 567 |
| Perugia..... | 567 |
| Torgiano..... | 578 |
| Lago Trasimeno | 578 |
| Todi | 581 |
| Assisi | 583 |
| Spello | 590 |
| Gubbio | 591 |
| Spoletto..... | 594 |
| Norcia & the Valnerina..... | 598 |

| | |
|-------------------------|------------|
| Orvieto | 599 |
| Le Marche | 605 |
| Ancona..... | 605 |
| Parco del Conero | 609 |
| Urbino | 610 |
| Pesaro | 614 |
| Grotte di Frasassi..... | 615 |
| Macerata | 615 |
| Ascoli Piceno | 617 |
| Monti Sibillini | 619 |
| Sarnano | 620 |

ABRUZZO & MOLISE 621

| | |
|---|------------|
| Abruzzo | 624 |
| Parco Nazionale del Gran Sasso e Monti della Laga | 624 |
| Sulmona..... | 624 |
| Parco Nazionale della Majella | 627 |
| Scanno..... | 628 |
| Parco Nazionale d'Abruzzo, Lazio e Molise..... | 630 |
| Pescara | 631 |
| Chieti | 633 |
| Vasto..... | 634 |
| Molise | 634 |
| Campobasso..... | 634 |
| Around Campobasso..... | 635 |
| Saepinum | 635 |
| Isernia | 635 |
| Around Isernia | 636 |
| Termoli..... | 636 |
| Albanian Towns..... | 637 |

NAPLES & CAMPANIA..... 638

| | |
|----------------------------|------------|
| Naples | 641 |
| Bay of Naples | 663 |
| Capri..... | 663 |

ON THE ROAD

| | |
|--|------------|
| Ischia | 670 |
| Procida..... | 672 |
| South of Naples | 673 |
| Ercolano & Herculaneum | 673 |
| Mt Vesuvius..... | 675 |
| Pompeii | 676 |
| Sorrento..... | 682 |
| West of Sorrento | 685 |
| Amalfi Coast | 686 |
| Positano..... | 687 |
| Praiano & Furore | 690 |
| Amalfi..... | 691 |
| Ravello..... | 693 |
| South of Amalfi..... | 695 |
| Costiera Cilentana | 699 |
| Agropoli..... | 699 |
| Parco Nazionale del Cilento e Vallo di Diano | 702 |

| | |
|---------------------------------------|-----|
| Northern Tyrrhenian Coast | 750 |
| Cosenza..... | 751 |
| Parco Nazionale della Sila | 753 |
| Ionian Coast | 758 |
| Parco Nazionale dell'Aspromonte | 759 |
| Reggio di Calabria | 759 |
| Southern Tyrrhenian Coast | 762 |

SICILY 765

| | |
|-------------------------------|------------|
| Palermo | 769 |
| Around Palermo..... | 782 |
| Tyrrhenian Coast | 783 |
| Cefalù..... | 783 |
| Aeolian Islands | 785 |
| Lipari | 785 |
| Vulcano | 788 |

| | |
|---|------------|
| Salina | 789 |
| Stromboli..... | 791 |
| Ionian Coast | 793 |
| Taormina | 793 |
| Catania..... | 798 |
| Mt Etna | 804 |
| Syracuse & the Southeast | 805 |
| Syracuse | 805 |
| Noto | 813 |
| Modica | 814 |
| Ragusa | 816 |

| | |
|---|------------|
| Central Sicily & the Mediterranean Coast | 817 |
| Agrigento..... | 817 |
| Western Sicily..... | 821 |
| Marsala | 821 |
| Selinunte | 825 |
| Trapani..... | 825 |

PUGLIA, BASILICATA & CALABRIA 704

| | |
|----------------------------------|------------|
| Puglia | 705 |
| Bari | 707 |
| Around Bari..... | 711 |
| Promontorio del Gargano | 714 |
| Isole Tremiti..... | 720 |
| Valle d'Itria | 721 |
| Lecce | 726 |
| Brindisi..... | 731 |
| Southern & Western Salento..... | 734 |
| Basilicata..... | 739 |
| Matera | 740 |
| Potenza | 747 |
| Appennino Lucano..... | 747 |
| Basilicata's Western Coast | 748 |
| Calabria | 749 |



JAYFER SANCHEZ / GETTY IMAGES ©

Contents

UNDERSTAND

| | |
|---------------|-----|
| Erice | 829 |
| Segesta | 830 |

SARDINIA 831

| |
|--|
| Cagliari..... 835 |
| Around Cagliari..... 841 |
| Villasimius..... 842 |
| Costa Rei..... 842 |
| Nora & Around..... 843 |
| Costa del Sud & Around..... 843 |
| Iglesias & the Southwest..... 844 |
| Iglesias..... 844 |
| Around Iglesias..... 845 |
| Iglesiente Coast..... 845 |
| Carbonia & Around..... 845 |
| Sant'Antioco & San Pietro..... 846 |
| Costa Verde..... 847 |

Oristano & the West... 847

| |
|-----------------------------|
| Oristano..... 847 |
| Barumini & Around..... 850 |
| Sinis Peninsula..... 850 |
| North Oristano Coast... 851 |

Alghero & the Northwest..... 853

| |
|-------------------------|
| Alghero..... 853 |
| Around Alghero..... 856 |
| Porto Torres..... 857 |

| |
|--|
| Stintino & Parco Nazionale dell'Asinara... 857 |
| Sassari..... 857 |
| Around Sassari..... 860 |

Olbia, the Costa Smeralda & the Gallura..... 861

| |
|-----------------------|
| Olbia..... 861 |
| Golfo Aranci..... 862 |

| |
|----------------------------------|
| Costa Smeralda & Around..... 862 |
| Santa Teresa di Gallura..... 863 |

| |
|---|
| Palau & Arcipelago di La Maddalena..... 864 |
|---|

Nuoro & the East 865

| |
|--------------------------|
| Nuoro..... 865 |
| Supramonte..... 867 |
| Golfo di Orosei..... 870 |
| Ogliastra..... 871 |

Italy Today..... 874

History..... 876

Italian Art & Architecture..... 892

The Italian Way of Life..... 912

Italy on Page & Screen..... 920

The Italian Table..... 924

SURVIVAL GUIDE

Directory A–Z..... 932

Transport..... 945

Language..... 953

Index..... 961

Map Legend..... 974



SISTINE CHAPEL, ROME
P66

SPECIAL FEATURES

Eat & Drink Like a Local..... 39

3D Roman Forum Illustration..... 76

Shakespeare's Veneto..... 396

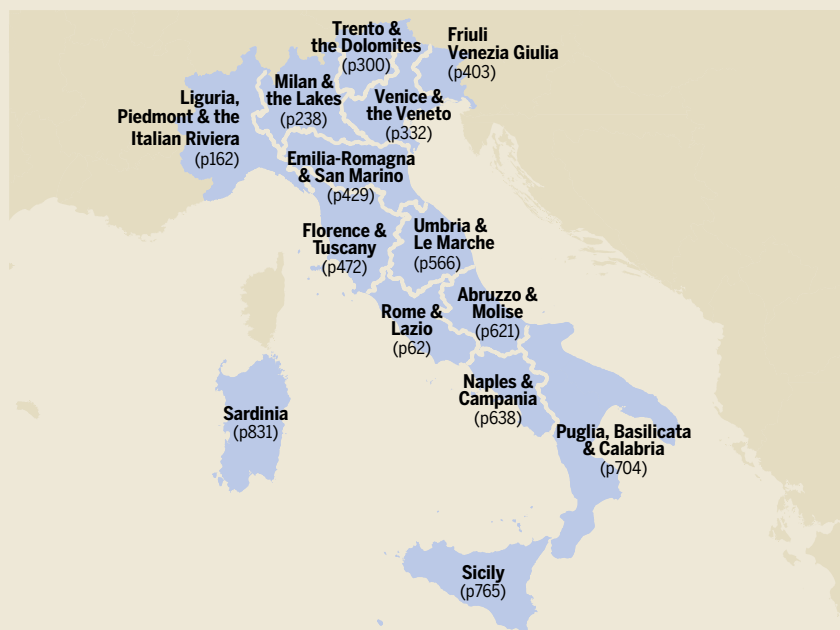
Chianti Wine Tour..... 540

3D Pompeii Illustration..... 678

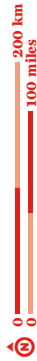
Renaissance Art..... 898



On the Road

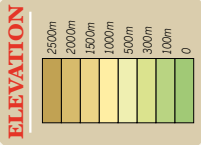


Italy



Gran Paradiso
Hike across high-altitude passes (p235)

Lago di Como
Cruise Lombardy's VIP Alpine lake (p269)



Dolomites
Scale Italy's most awesome granite peaks (p308)

Venice
Count millions of mosaic tesserae at San Marco (p336)

Emilia-Romagna
Tuck into Italy's culinary epicentre (p431)

Italian Riviera
Village-hop along the Cinque Terre (p183)

Italian Alps
Ski Piedmont's Milky Way (p212)





Tuscany
Indulge in art and vine-laced landscapes (p472)

Rome
Catch up on thousands of years of history (p66)

Pompeii
Ponder the fallen mighty in Pompeii (p676)

Amalfi Coast
Join A-listers on this spectacular coast (p691)

Naples
Experience Italy at its most intense (p641)

Lecco
Discover the Florence of the south (p726)

Mt Etna
Climb the home of Titans (p804)

Sardinia
Swim in sea caves and secluded coves (p831)

**Duncan Garwood**

Rome & Lazio Born in the UK, Duncan currently lives in the Castelli Romani hills just outside Rome. He first fell for the Italian capital in 1996 after arriving at the crack of dawn on an overnight train and walking the almost-deserted streets in beautiful morning sunlight. Since then he has worked on the past five *Rome* guides and a whole host of Lonely Planet Italy titles. He has also written on Italy for newspapers and magazines.

**Paula Hardy**

Milan & the Lakes; Venice & the Veneto From the slopes of Valpolicella to the shores of Lago di Garda and the spritz-fuelled bars of Padua, Venice and Milan, Paula has been contributing to Lonely Planet's Italian guides for over 10 years, including guides to Milan, the Italian Lakes, Venice & the Veneto, Puglia, Sicily and Sardinia. When she's not scooting around the *bel paese*, she writes for a variety of travel publications and websites. You can find her tweeting from lakes, islands

and mountains @paula6hardy.

**Virginia Maxwell**

Florence & Tuscany Based in Australia, Virginia spends part of every year in Italy indulging her passions for history, art, architecture, food and wine. She is the coordinating author of Lonely Planet's *Florence & Tuscany* and the *Florence Encounter* guide, and has covered both Tuscany and other parts of the country for the *Western Europe* guide and for previous editions of this title. Though reticent to nominate her favourite Italian destinations (arguing that they're all wonderful),

she usually nominates Florence and Rome if pressed.

**Brendan Sainsbury**

Liguria, Piedmont & the Italian Riviera; Emilia-Romagna & San Marino Born and bred in Hampshire, England, but now resident in Vancouver, Canada, Brendan first tackled Italy with a famed Inter-rail pass in the 1980s. He has been back innumerable times since as a travel guide, cyclist and – very occasionally – a tourist. This is his fourth Italy-related guidebook (he also wrote Lonely Planet's *Hiking in Italy*), though he has covered numerous other countries for Lonely

Planet, including Angola, Cuba and the USA. His favourite Italian city is Bologna.

**Helena Smith**

Abruzzo & Molise; Puglia, Basilicata & Calabria Helena has been visiting Italy since she was five. At that time chocolate spread on toast was the main draw – now she goes back for the warmth, the art and the atmosphere. Researching this edition took her from mountain villages in Abruzzo to baroque Lecce and the ancient cave city of Matera.

**Donna Wheeler**

Trento & the Dolomites; Friuli Venezia Giulia Italy's northeastern border regions are Donna's dream assignment: complex histories, mountains, the sea, plus all that spectacular white wine and Viennese cake. Donna has travelled throughout Italy for two decades and lived in Turin's Quadrilatero Romano until 2011. She has also written for Lonely Planet on Milan, southern France, Tunisia and Algeria. An erstwhile editor and producer, she now writes about art, architecture and food for

several publications and is a creative consultant specialising in the travel experience.



OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that's all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they'd sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Melbourne, London and Oakland, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony's belief that 'a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse'.

OUR WRITERS



Cristian Bonetto

Coordinating Author; Naples & Campania An ex-writer of farce and TV drama, it's not surprising that Cristian clicks with Italy. Born to a Venetian father and a Piedmontese mother, the Italo-Australian scribe was proudly bred the Italian way, and has both lived and holidayed in the *bel paese* (beautiful country). His musings on the motherland have appeared in newspapers, magazines and websites across the globe. When he's not in Italy hunting down perfect coffee or pastries, you'll find him scouring the rest of the globe for insight and delight. Cristian's Lonely Planet titles to date also include *New York City*, *Denmark*, *Scandinavia* and *Singapore*. You can follow his adventures on Twitter @CristianBonetto. Cristian also wrote the Plan Your Trip, Italian Art & Architecture, The Italian Way of Life, Italy on Page & Screen and Survival Guide chapters.



Abigail Blasi

Abigail moved to Rome in 2003 and lived there for three years, she married an Italian and her first son was born in Rome. Nowadays the *famiglia* divide their time between Rome, Puglia and London. She has worked on four editions of Lonely Planet's *Rome* and *Italy* guides, including the latest *Discover Italy* and *Discover Rome* guides, and cowrote the first edition of *Puglia & Basilicata*. She also regularly writes on Italy for various publications, including *Lonely Planet Magazine*, *Wanderlust* and *i-escape.com*. Abigail wrote the Italy Today, History, and The Italian Table chapters.



Kerry Christiani

Umbria & Le Marche; Sardinia Kerry's relationship with Italia began one hazy, post-graduation summer when she set off for a grand tour in a 1960s bubble caravan. Memorable moments researching this edition include spring coastal walks along Sardinia's cliff-flanked Golfo di Orosei, hill-town slow touring in Umbria and getting stuck in a rare snow storm in Urbino. An award-winning travel writer, Kerry has authored some 20 guidebooks, including Lonely Planet's *Sardinia*, and contributes to publications including *bbc.com/travel* and *Lonely Planet Traveller*. She tweets @kerrychristiani and lists her latest work at *www.kerrychristiani.com*.



Gregor Clark

Sicily Gregor caught the Italy bug at age 14 while living in Florence with his professor dad, who took him to see every fresco, mosaic and museum within a 1000km radius. He's lived in Le Marche, huffed and puffed across the Dolomites, and fallen head-over-heels for Sicily while researching Lonely Planet's *Cycling Italy* and the last three editions of the *Italy* guide. A lifelong polyglot with a romance languages degree, his peak experience this trip was celebrating his birthday atop an erupting Stromboli.

OVER MORE
PAGE WRITERS

Published by Lonely Planet Publications Pty Ltd

ABN 36 005 607 983

11th edition – Feb 2014

ISBN 978 1 74220 729 2

© Lonely Planet 2014 Photographs © as indicated 2014

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Printed in China

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be copied, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic, mechanical, recording or otherwise, except brief extracts for the purpose of review, and no part of this publication may be sold or hired, without the written permission of the publisher. Lonely Planet and the Lonely Planet logo are trademarks of Lonely Planet and are registered in the US Patent and Trademark Office and in other countries. Lonely Planet does not allow its name or logo to be appropriated by commercial establishments, such as retailers, restaurants or hotels. Please let us know of any misuses: *lonelyplanet.com/ip*.

Although the authors and Lonely Planet have taken all reasonable care in preparing this book, we make no warranty about the accuracy or completeness of its content and, to the maximum extent permitted, disclaim all liability arising from its use.

Itineraries



2
WEEKS

Rome to Venice

So much to see, so little time. Sample some of Italy's most seductive sights and flavours on this easy route of must-sees. Start with three days in **Rome**, punctuating blockbuster sights with market grazing in the Campo de' Fiori and late-night revelry in Trastevere. On day four, head to Renaissance **Florence**. Drop in on Michelangelo's *David* at the Galleria dell'Accademia and pick your favourite Botticelli at the Uffizi Gallery.

Come day seven, break free to the rolling landscape of Tuscany's Chianti wine region. Recharge with a couple of nights on a farm at **Fattoria di Rignano**, day tripping it to the historic wine cellars at Badia di Passignano and the brooding medieval town of **Siena**.

Gothic beauty also defines **Bologna**, your next stop. Spend a few days soaking up its porticoed streets, museums and superlative regional cooking. Fed and *felice* (happy), continue north for three unforgettable days in **Venice**. Check off musts like the mosaic-encrusted Basilica di San Marco, art-crammed Gallerie dell'Accademia and secret passageways in the Palazzo Ducale, then toast to your trip with a Veneto *prosecco* (sparkling wine).



The Grand Tour

Originally the preserve of aristocratic young men – part scholar's pilgrimage, part rite of passage – the grand tour is now for anyone with enough time on their hands to travel the length of the Italian peninsula from north to south (or vice versa).

The itinerary traditionally started in **Turin** – and, less often, **Milan**. In **Turin** you can explore the Savoy palaces, in particular the Venaria Reale, Italy's mini-Versailles, and in **Milan**, admire Leonardo da Vinci's *The Last Supper*. Short excursions to **Lago di Maggiore** or **Lago di Como** might also be in order to enjoy the landscaped lake gardens of Villa Taranto and Villa Carlotta respectively. Board the train for Venice, stopping in **Verona** for a night or two to catch some opera in the Roman Arena. At least four days are needed to enjoy the architectural masterpiece that is **Venice** – the 'locus of decadent Italianate allure'.

During week two start your journey south in **Padua** by taking in Giotto's groundbreaking frescoes in Scrovegni Chapel, dazzling Byzantine mosaics in **Ravenna** and culinary delights in **Bologna** before pausing in **Florence** for a few days. Here you can fill your days with extensive museum visits admiring the monuments and art works of the Renaissance alongside Roman sculptures in the archaeological museum. Day trips to Romanesque **Lucca**, Renaissance **Pisa** or Gothic **Siena** might also feature, time permitting.

By week three you will arrive in **Rome** to study the ruins of the ancient world and the exhaustive art collections at the Vatican, Villa Borghese and Capitoline Hill. Don't try to do it all! Select a few highlights to enjoy and allow plenty of time for coffee in Piazza Navona or dinner in some of Rome's more avant-garde restaurants. Then, head straight to **Naples** for opera at the Teatro San Carlo and archaeological day trips to Herculaneum and Pompeii. Consider also exploring the city's catacombs or scaling Mt Vesuvius. Then end your month-long tour along the romantic **Amalfi Coast** from where you can day trip to offshore **Capri**.

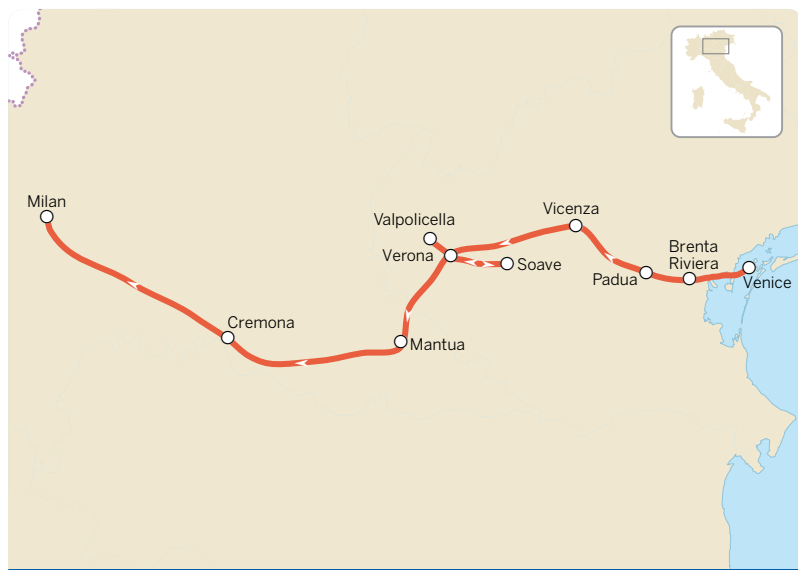


Classic Art Cities

The centre of the Renaissance and home to Michelangelo and Dante, Tuscany and Umbria's treasury of architectural styles and artistic expression have made them justifiably world-famous. Start this two-week exploration with three days in **Florence**, where the entire scooter-crammed centre is a World Heritage Site packed with Italy's finest booty of Renaissance art. Climb to the top of Brunelleschi's arresting Duomo, lust after Michelangelo's alpha *David* at the Gallerie dell'Accademia, and meditate on Botticelli's iconic *The Birth of Venus* and *Primavera* at the Uffizi Gallery.

Decamp to **Pisa** to see the architectural ensemble that makes up the Piazza dei Miracoli and then swap Renaissance for Gothic in **Siena**, spending at least two days exploring its brooding streets, frescoed churches and sweeping Piazza del Campo. Tone your thighs and sharpen your orientation by climbing the 400 steps of Torre del Mangia, home to pulse-quickenning views of the city. The tower, built on Piazza del Campo in 1344, was at the time a remarkable engineering feat and one of the tallest nonsectarian towers in Italy. From Siena, head on to the fairy-tale medieval towers of **San Gimignano**, a town often dubbed the 'medieval Manhattan' for its dizzying historic skyline. Arrive late in the day so you can enjoy the tiny hill town without the strain of crowds.

On day eight make a slow procession to **Pienza** then skirt the southern shore of **Lago Trasimeno** to reach **Assisi**, where you can admire those Giotto frescoes that caused such a stir in the Middle Ages. Slip into the Romanesque Basilica di Santa Chiara, home to the very cross that reputedly spoke to St Francis. More ethereal energy lingers inside the Santuario di San Damiano, considered the very spot where Assisi's famous saint first heard the voice of God. You'll want at least two days to do them justice before heading southeast to end with the lavish, mosaic-clad cathedral in **Orvieto**.



Venice to Milan

In the 16th century the Venetian summer began early in June, when every household loaded onto barges for a summer sojourn along the **Brenta Riviera**. You too can make like a Venetian on a boat trip along the Riviera after spending a few days in **Venice**. Marvel at the Tiepolo frescoes of Villa Pisani Nazionale, drop in to the Shoemakers' Museum at Villa Foscari Rossi and stop in at Palladio's Villa Foscari.

Boat trips along the Brenta Riviera end in **Padua** where you can overnight overlooking the Basilica di Sant'Antonio. Don't miss the small wonders next door: the Oratorio di San Giorgio and the Scoletta del Santo. With advance booking, you can see Padua's crowning glory, Giotto's frescoed Scrovegni Chapel.

On day six hop on the train to **Vicenza**. Spend the afternoon watching sunlight ripple across the soaring facades of Palladio's *palazzi* (mansions) and illuminate the Villa Valmarana 'ai Nani', covered floor-to-ceiling with frescoes by Giambattista and Giandomenico Tiepolo, then head on to **Verona** for three or four days.

Here you can view Mantegnas at Basilica di San Zeno Maggiore, and go window-shopping on Via Mazzini. Then listen to opera in the Roman Arena and wander Verona's balconied backstreets where Romeo wooed Juliet. From Verona, make a day trip north-west to **Valpolicella**, where you can sample the highly prized Amarone (red wine) by appointment at Montecariano Cellars, or back east to **Soave** for a sampling of its namesake Denominazione di origine controllata (DOC) white wine at Azienda Agricola Coffele.

On day 11 dip southwest to regal **Mantua** for an impressive display of dynastic power and patronage at the Gonzagas' fortified family pad, the Palazzo Ducale. Or for something altogether more dramatic, witness the giants trying to storm Mt Olympus in Giulio Romano's fresco in the Camera dei Giganti at Palazzo Te.

Finish up with a two-day stop in **Cremona**, where you can chat with artisans in one of the 100 or so violin-making shops around Piazza del Comune before hearing them in action at the Teatro Amilcare Ponchielli, and then heading on to end your tour in **Milan**.

1
WEEK

A Lakes Tour

A short drive northwest of Malpensa airport, **Milan**, and you're on the edge of one of Italy's most serene scenes, Lago Maggiore.

Start with three nights in belle époque **Stresa** and visit the lavish **Borromean Islands**: Isola Madre for its romantic gardens and wisteria-clad Staircase of the Dead; and Isola Bella for its priceless art collection, vast ballrooms and shell-encrusted grotto. Take the funicular up to **Monte Mottarone** and day trip to **Lago d'Orta** and the bijou **Isola San Giulio**.

On day four head north from Stresa to **Verbania**, picnicking amid the tulips of Villa Taranto before gliding east across the lake to **Laveno** and straight on to celebrity haunt **Como**. Amble the flower-laden lakeside to view art exhibits at Villa Olmo before finding a sun lounge at the Lido di Villa Olmo. You could spend days playing in Como, hiring out seaplanes and boats, or hiking the mountainous hinterland of the Triangolo Lariano. If you're ambitious you can walk to chic **Bellagio**. Otherwise take the lake road on day six and lunch on perch in **Lezzeno** before one last romantic night lakeside.

2
WEEKS

Northwest Highlights

Often dismissed as little more than the country's economic engine, Italy's northwest packs a surprising cultural and culinary punch. Start with three days in **Milan**, counting masterpieces at the Pinacoteca di Brera, striking a pose in the fashion-obsessed Quadrilatero d'Oro and schmoozing with hip locals in Navigli. Styled up, catch a westbound train to **Turin** for three days of French-influenced architecture, historic cafes, and fabulous museums spanning ancient Egypt to world cinema. Continue south to the foodie town of **Alba**, famed for its prized black truffles. Base yourself here for three days, allowing time to taste-test the winegrowing towns of **Barolo** and **Barbaresco**. Continue south for a day in gritty **Genoa**, sampling its famous *pesto genovese* and taking in the celebrated art and architecture of the Musei di Strada Nuova. The following day, slide on those designer shades and head east for an afternoon of posing in chichi **Portofino** before slumbering in better-value **Santa Margherita**. Spend your final two days hiking the stunning **Cinque Terre** coast, laced with terraced vines, story-book fishing villages and some of Italy's tastiest seafood.



Puglian Promenade

For the majority of visitors to Italy, a trip 'south' means Naples and the Amalfi Coast: what a shame! Puglia, which forms the heel of Lo Stivale (The Boot), is one of the country's most underrated regions. Fly in to **Bari**, where you can find the relics of Father Christmas in the Romanesque cathedral. Strike out south, via **Polignano a Mare**, to the famous **Grotte di Castellana**. From here a two- to three-day drive south will take you through some of the finest Valle d'Itria towns, including **Alberobello**, with its hobbit-like, conical *trulli* houses, wine-producing **Locorotondo**, beautiful baroque **Martina Franca** and chic, whitewashed **Ostuni**. In Martina Franca you get just a small taste of what is awaiting you in **Lecce**, otherwise known as the 'Florence of the south' for its operatic architectural ensembles and scholarly bent. Hire a bike and spend at least three or four days there before striking out to the fortified ports of **Otranto** in the southeast or **Gallipoli** in the southwest, with their sandy blue-flag-accredited beaches. If you don't get caught up gulping raw sea urchins and octopuses, push south to **Santa Maria di Leuca**, the very tip of the Italian stiletto.



Best of Sicily

Sicily is a sweet, sour, spicy *tajine* of East-West architecture, impossibly ancient ruins, and fiery geology. Fly into **Palermo**, taking three days to savour its raffish palazzi, souklike markets, and the extraordinary mosaics at Cattedrale di Monreale.

On day four, conjure the ancients at the Doric temple in **Segesta**, before continuing to **Trapani** to sample its celebrated Arabesque cuisine. Come morning, hop on the funicular to hilltop **Erice**, but come back down to spend day six sipping sweet local wine in elegant **Marsala** and day seven roaming the Greek ruins of **Selinunte**. The incredible Valle dei Templi in **Agrigento** is your destination on day eight.

On day nine, shoot to the Val di Noto to explore the World Heritage baroque towns of **Ragusa**, **Modica** and **Noto**. Change gear on days 12 and 13 in youthful, worldly **Catania**. Pumped, scale **Mt Etna** on day 14 before two indulgent days of wining, dining and coastal posing in chic **Taormina**. From **Messina**, catch a hydrofoil to the stunning **Aeolian Islands** for five merited days of beach time and volcanic pyrotechnics.

© Lonely Planet Publications Pty Ltd. To make it easier for you to use, access to this chapter is not digitally restricted. In return, we think it's fair to ask you to use it for personal, non-commercial purposes only. In other words, please don't upload this chapter to a peer-to-peer site, mass email it to everyone you know, or resell it. See the terms and conditions on our site for a longer way of saying the above - 'Do the right thing with our content.'