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Italian Highlights

A perfect introduction to Italy, this easy tour ticks off some of the country’s most seductive sights, including Roman ruins, Renaissance masterpieces and the world’s most beautiful lagoon city.

Start with three days in mighty Rome, punctuating blockbuster sights like the Colosseum, Palatino (Palatine Hill) and Sistine Chapel with market grazing in the Campo de’ Fiori, boutique-hopping in Monti 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 Galleria degli Uffizi. For a change of pace, escape to the Tuscan countryside on day six for a day trip to Gothic Siena, home of the biannual Palio horse race.

The following day, continue north for three unforgettable days in Venice. Check off musts like the mosaic-encrusted Basilica di San Marco, art-slung Gallerie dell’Accademia and secret passageways of the Palazzo Ducale, then live like a true Venetian, scouring seafood-laden stalls at the Rialto Market, noshing on the city’s famous cicheti (Venetian tapas) and toasting with a Veneto prosecco (sparkling wine).
This two-week route takes in some of northern Italy’s most extraordinary assets, from cultural-powerhouse cities to one of Italy’s most arresting stretches of coastline.

Begin with a trio of days in Venice, its trading-port pedigree echoed in the Near East accents of its architecture and the synagogues of its 500-year-old Ghetto. Don’t miss big-hitters like the Basilica di San Marco and the Gallerie dell’Accademia, but leave time for less-trodden treasures, among them the Chiesa della Madonna dell’Orto. On day four, continue to Ravenna, former capital of the Western Roman Empire and home to no less than eight Unesco World Heritage–listed sites. Among these are the basilicas of San Vitale and Sant’Apollinare Nuovo, both adorned with extraordinary Byzantine mosaics.

Spend days six and seven in erudite Bologna, home to the world’s fifth-largest church and its oldest university. The university district is the location of the Pinacoteca Nazionale, its powerhouse art collection including works by regional master Parmigianino. One of Bologna’s fortes is gastronomy, a fact not lost on its Quadrilatero district, an area smothered with produce stalls, fragrant delis, restaurants and an appetite-piquing food hall.

Burn off those excess calories with three days of pavement pounding in Florence. It’s here that you’ll find many of Western art’s most revered works, including Michelangelo’s chiselled David and Botticelli’s ethereal paintings Primavera and La nascita di Venere. The city’s Renaissance credentials extend to its architecture, which includes Filippo Brunelleschi’s show-stopping Duomo dome. Even the city’s gardens are manicured masterpieces, exemplified by the supremely elegant Giardino di Boboli.

On day 11, pit-stop in Pisa to eye-up the architectural ensemble that makes up the Piazza dei Miracoli, then continue to nearby Renaissance show pony Lucca. Spend the following day exploring Lucca’s elegant streets, picnicking on its centuries-old ramparts and meditating on Tintoretto’s soul-stirring Last Supper in the Cattedrale di San Martino. Human ingenuity and natural beauty merge on Liguria’s World Heritage–listed Cinque Terre, where five colourful villages seemingly defy their precarious natural setting. This is your final stop, with two days to explore its medieval village streets, remarkable terraced gardens, muretti (dry stone walls) and breathtaking coastal walks.
From elegant northern cities and lakes to ancient southern coasts and dwellings, this grand tour encapsulates Italy’s inimitable natural and cultural diversity.

Start in style with two days in Milan. Shop among coveted boutiques, dine at hot-spot restaurants and demand an encore at the gilded La Scala. Come day three, continue to Lago di Como (Lake Como), basing yourself in Como or Bellagio and spending two romantic days among its sublime waterside villas and villages. If you haven’t been wooed by Hollywood royalty, continue to Venice on day five, where the following trio of days burst with Titians and Tintorettos, artisan studios and convivial bacari (bars). On day eight, shoot southwest to Florence, allowing three days to tackle its heavyweight art collections and sink your teeth into its bistecca alla fiorentina (T-bone steak). Gluttonous acts are forgiven on day 11 as you travel to the pilgrimage city of Assisi, its Gothic basilica lavished with Giotto frescoes. Head southwest to Rome on day 13 and spend three full days exploring its two-millennia-worth of temples, churches, piazzas and artistic marvels.

On day 17, slip south to Naples and its explosion of baroque architecture and subterranean ruins. Day-trip it to the ruins of Pompeii on day 19, then sail to Capri on day 20 for three seductive days of boating, hikes and piazza-side posing. If it’s high season, catch a ferry directly to laid-back Sorrento on day 23, spending a night in town before hitting the hairpin turns of the glorious Amalfi Coast. Allow two days in chi-chi Positano, where you can hike the heavenly Sentiero degli Dei (Walk of the Gods). Spend day 26 in historic Amalfi before continuing to sky-high Ravello, long-time haunt of composers and Hollywood stars. Stay the night to soak up its understated elegance, and spend the following morning soaking up its uber-romantic gardens. After an evening of bar-hopping in upbeat Salerno, shoot inland to Matera on day 28 to experience its World Heritage-listed sassi (former cave dwellings) and dramatic Matera Gravina gorge. Come day 30, continue through to architecturally astounding Lecce, the ‘Florence of the South’ and your final cross-country stop.
Aristocratic villas, renegade frescoes, star-struck lovers and cult-status wines; this easy two-week journey serves up a feast of northern assets.

Begin with a couple of days in Venice, sampling the city’s enviable art, architecture and seafood. In the 16th century the Venetian summer began early in June, when every household loaded onto barges for a summer sojourn along the nearby Brenta Riviera. You too can make like a Venetian on a boat trip along the Riviera, marvelling at the Tiepolo frescoes of Villa Pisani Nazionale and snooping around Palladio’s Villa Foscari. Boat trips along the Brenta Riviera end in Padua where you can overnight overlooking the Basilica di Sant’Antonio. With advance booking, you can see Padua’s crowning glory, Giotto’s frescoed Capella degli Scrovegni.

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 Gian-domenico Tiepolo, then head on to Verona for three or four days. Here you can view Mantegnas at Basilica di San Zeno Maggiore, ponder modern art at the Galleria d’Arte Moderna Achille Forti, and find tranquillity in the 16th-century oasis of Giardino Giusti. It’s also here that you can listen to opera in the Roman Arena and wander balconied backstreets where Romeo wooed Juliet.

From Verona, consider a day trip northwest to Valpolicella to sip highly prized Amarone (red wine), or back east to Soave for a sampling of its namesake DOC white wine.

On day 11 dip southwest to Mantua for an impressive display of dynastic power and patronage at the Gonzagas’ fortified family pad, the Palazzo Ducale. Finish up with a two-day stop in Cremona, where you can chat with artisans in one of the 100 violin-making shops around Piazza del Comune before hearing the instruments in action at the Teatro Amilcare Ponchielli. Done, shoot northwest to wrap up your tour in Italy’s financial and fashion epicentre, Milan. On-trend shopping and dining aside, the city is home to a string of artistic treasures, among them Leonardo da Vinci’s iconic The Last Supper.
Laced with cross-cultural influences, hot-list wines, world-famous charcuterie and stunning Alpine landscapes, this lesser-known corner of the country is ripe for discovery.

After three days in Venice, head east to Trieste via the Roman ruins of Aquileia and the medieval heart of Grado. Take two days in Trieste for its gilded cafes, literary heritage and central European air, then catch a ferry to Muggia, the only Italian settlement on the Istrian peninsula. On day seven, head inland for celebrated whites in the Collio wine region.

Spend two days in Udine, dropping in on the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art and sidestepping to Cividale del Friuli, home to Europe’s only surviving example of Lombard architecture and artwork. On day 10, pit-stop in San Daniele del Friuli for Italy’s best prosciutto before hitting breathtaking mountain scenery on your way to ski town Cortina d’Ampezzo. Allow two days to hit the slopes, on winter skis or in summer hiking boots. Either way, head south on day 14, stopping for afternoon bubbles in the prosecco heartland of Conegliano before wrapping things up in Venice.
### A Lakes Tour

Tickling the snowcapped Alps, Italy’s glacial lakes have lured romantics for centuries, from European royalty to American silver-screen pin-ups. Live the dream, if only for a week.

A short drive northwest of Malpensa airport, **Milan**, and you’re on the edge of 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 bijou **Isola San Giulio**. On day four head north from Stresa to **Verbania**, picnicking at 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 in Como, hiring out boats or hiking the mountainous Triangolo Lariano. If you’re ambitious you can walk to chic **Bellagio**. Otherwise, take the lake road and lunch on a perch in **Lezzeno** before one last romantic night lakeside.

### Southern Coastal Route

Graeco-Roman ruins, a Bourbon palace and some of Italy’s most beautiful coastline: crank up the romance on this two-week journey through the sun-baked south.

Rev things up with three days in exhilarating **Naples**, day-tripping it to **Caserta** to explore Italy’s largest royal palace. On day four, head south to the Amalfi Coast, allowing for two nights in **Positano**, followed by a day in **Amalfi** and **Ravello** on your way to **Salerno**. Come day seven, continue to the World Heritage-listed temples of **Paestum**, then through the **Parco Nazionale del Cilento e Vallo di Diano** to cognoscenti coastal jewel **Maratea**. Spend two nights in town, followed by lunch in **Tropea** (one of Calabria’s most beautiful coast towns) on your way to **Villa San Giovanni**. Catch the ferry across to Sicily and treat yourself to three nights in fashionable **Taormina**, Sicily’s former Byzantine capital and home to the world’s most spectacularly located Greek amphitheatre. Sun-kissed and relaxed, continue to **Catania** on day 13, taking two days to soak up the city’s ancient sites, extraordinary baroque architecture and vibrant market life.
Map Legend

Sights
- Beach
- Bird Sanctuary
- Buddhist
- Castle/Palace
- Christian
- Confucian
- Hindu
- Islamic
- Jain
- Jewish
- Monument
- Museum/Gallery/Historic Building
- Ruin
- Shinto
- Sikh
- Taoist
- Winery/Vineyard
- Zoo/Wildlife Sanctuary
- Other Sight

Activities, Courses & Tours
- Bodysurfing
- Diving
- Canoeing/Kayaking
- Course/Tour
- Sento Hot Baths/Onsen
- Skiing
- Snorkelling
- Surfing
- Swimming/Pool
- Walking
- Windsurfing
- Other Activity

Sleeping
- Sleeping
- Camping
- Hut/Shelter

Eating
- Eating

Drinking & Nightlife
- Drinking & Nightlife
- Cafe

Entertainment
- Entertainment

Shopping
- Shopping

Information
- Bank
- Embassy/Consulate
- Hospital/Medical
- Internet
- Police
- Post Office
- Telephone
- Toilet
- Tourist Information
- Other Information

Geographic
- Beach
- Gate
- Hut/Shelter
- Lighthouse
- Lookout
- Mountain/Volcano
- Oasis
- Park
- Pass
- Picnic Area
- Waterfall

Population
- Capital (National)
- Capital (State/Province)
- City/Large Town
- Town/Village

Transport
- Airport
- Border crossing
- Bus
- Cable car/Funicular
- Cycling
- Ferry
- Metro station
- Monorail
- Parking
- Petrol station
- S-Bahn/Subway station
- Taxi
- T-bane/Tunnelbana station
- Train station/Railway
- Tram
- Tube station
- U-Bahn/Underground station
- Other Transport

Routes
- Tollway
- Freeway
- Primary
- Secondary
- Tertiary
- Lane
- Unsealed road
- Road under construction
- Plaza/Mall
- Steps
- Tunnel
- Pedestrian overpass
- Walking Tour
- Walking Tour detour
- Path/Walking Trail

Boundaries
- International
- State/Province
- Disputed
- Regional/Suburb
- Marine Park
- Cliff
- Wall

Hydrography
- River, Creek
- Intermittent River
- Canal
- Water
- Dry/Salt/Intermittent Lake
- Reef

Areas
- Airport/Runway
- Beach/Desert
- Cemetery (Christian)
- Cemetery (Other)
- Glacier
- Mudflat
- Park/Forest
- Sight (Building)
- Sportsground
- Swamp/Mangrove

Note: Not all symbols displayed above appear on the maps in this book
Kevin Raub
Emilia-Romagna & San Marino; Umbria & Le Marche
Atlanta native Kevin started his career as a music journalist in New York, working for *Men’s Journal* and *Rolling Stone* magazines. He ditched the rock ‘n’ roll lifestyle for travel writing and has written nearly 50 Lonely Planet guides, focused mainly on Brazil, Chile, Colombia, USA, India, the Caribbean and Portugal. Raub also contributes to a variety of travel magazines in both the USA and UK. Along the way, the self-confessed hophead is in constant search of wildly high IBUs in local beers.

Regis St Louis
Milan & the Lakes
Regis grew up in a small town in the American Midwest – the kind of place that fuels big dreams of travel – and he developed an early fascination with foreign dialects and world cultures. He spent his formative years learning Russian and a handful of Romance languages, which served him well on journeys across much of the globe. Regis has contributed to more than 50 Lonely Planet titles, covering destinations across six continents. When not on the road, he lives in New Orleans.
Border-hopping is way of life for British writer, runner, foodie, art aficionado and mum-of-three Nicola Williams, who has lived in a French village on the southern side of Lake Geneva for more than a decade. Nicola has authored more than 50 guidebooks on Paris, Provence, Rome, Tuscany, France, Italy and Switzerland for Lonely Planet and covers France as a destination expert for the *Telegraph*. Nicola also wrote the Travel with Children chapter.

Cristian has contributed to more than 30 Lonely Planet guides to date, including *New York City, Italy, Venice & the Veneto*, *Naples & the Amalfi Coast*, *Denmark, Copenhagen*, *Sweden* and *Singapore*. Lonely Planet work aside, his musings on travel, food, culture and design appear in numerous publications around the world, including *The Telegraph* (UK) and *Corriere del Mezzogiorno* (Italy). Cristian also wrote chapters for Plan, Understand and Survival.

Kerry is an award-winning travel writer, photographer and Lonely Planet author, specialising in Central and Southern Europe. Based in Wales, she has authored more than a dozen Lonely Planet titles. An adventure addict, she loves mountains, cold places and true wilderness. Kerry’s insatiable wanderlust has taken her to all seven continents – from the frozen wilderness of Antarctica to the Australian Outback – and shows no sign of waning. Her writing appears regularly in publications such as *Adventure Travel* magazine, and she is a *Telegraph* Travel expert for Austria and Wales. Kerry also wrote the Outdoor Activities chapter.

A travel author for the last decade, Marc has worked for Lonely Planet in Siberia, Slovakia, Bavaria, England, Ukraine, Austria, Poland, Croatia, Portugal, Madeira and on the Trans-Siberian Railway, as well as writing and updating tens of other guides for other publishers. When not on the road, Marc lives between Sandwich, Kent and Mariánské Lázně in the Czech Republic with his wife and two sons.

From facing fast bowlers in Barbados to sidestepping hungry pigs in Goa, Duncan’s travels have thrown up many unique experiences. These days he largely dedicates himself to Italy, his adopted homeland where’s he’s been living since 1997. From his base in the Castelli Romani hills outside Rome, he’s clocked up endless kilometres exploring the country’s well-known destinations and far-flung reaches, working on guides to Rome, Sardinia, Sicily, Piedmont, and *Naples & the Amalfi Coast*.

Paula Hardy is an independent travel writer and editorial consultant, whose work for Lonely Planet and other publications has taken her from nomadic camps in the Danakil Depression to Seychellois beach huts and the jewel-like bar at the Gritti Palace on the Grand Canal. Over two decades, she has authored more than 30 Lonely Planet guidebooks and spent five years as commissioning editor of Lonely Planet’s bestselling Italian list. These days you’ll find her hunting down new hotels, hip bars and up-and-coming artisans primarily in Milan, Venice and Marrakesh.

Though based in Melbourne, Australia, Virginia spends at least three months of every year in Europe and the Middle East researching guidebooks and other travel-related content for a variety of publishers. She caught the travel bug during her first overseas trip to London, where she lived for a couple of years after finishing an Arts degree at university, and she’s been travelling regularly ever since. For the past 13 years Virginia has been working full-time as a travel writer and occasional book reviewer.
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 Franklin, London, Melbourne, Oakland, Dublin, Beijing and Delhi, 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

Gregor Clark
Sardinia, Sicily Gregor is a US-based writer whose love of foreign languages and curiosity about what’s around the next bend have taken him to dozens of countries on five continents. Chronic wanderlust has also led him to visit all 50 states and most Canadian provinces on countless road trips through his native North America. Since 2000, Gregor has regularly contributed to Lonely Planet guides, with a focus on Europe and the Americas.

Peter Dragicevich
Venice & the Veneto After a career in niche newspaper and magazine publishing, both in his native New Zealand and in Australia, Peter finally gave into Kiwi wanderlust, giving up staff jobs to chase his diverse roots around much of Europe. Over the last decade he’s written dozens of guidebooks for Lonely Planet on an oddly disparate collection of countries, all of which he’s come to love.

Hugh McNaughtan
Abruzzo & Molise; Puglia, Basilicata & Calabria A former English lecturer, Hugh swapped grant applications for visa applications, and turned his love of travel intro a full-time thing. Having done a bit of restaurant-reviewing in his home town (Melbourne) he’s now eaten his way across four continents. He’s never happier than when on the road with his two daughters.

Brendan Sainsbury
Born and raised in the UK in a town that never merits a mention in any guidebook (Andover, Hampshire), Brendan spent the holidays of his youth caravanning in the English Lake District and didn’t leave Blighty until he was nineteen. Making up for lost time, he’s since squeezed 70 countries into a sometimes precarious existence as a writer and professional vagabond. In the last 11 years, he has written more than 40 books for Lonely Planet from Castro’s Cuba to the canyons of Peru.

Donna Wheeler
Turin, Piedmont & the Italian Riviera, Trentino & South Tyrol; Friuli Venezia Giulia Donna has written guidebooks for Lonely Planet for more than 10 years, covering regions across Italy, Norway, Belgium, Africa, Tunisia, Algeria, France, Austria and Australia. She is the author of Paris Precincts, a curated photographic guide to the city’s best bars, restaurants and shops, and is reporter for Italian contemporary art publisher My Art Guides. Donna also wrote the Art & Architecture chapter.

Published by Lonely Planet Global Limited
CRN 554153
13th edition – Feb 2018
ISBN 978 1 78657 351 3
© Lonely Planet 2018 Photographs © as indicated 2018
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
Printed in China

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